

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE PHOENIX SCHOOL**

Telford

LEA area: Telford and Wrekin

Unique reference number: 123576

Headteacher: Mr J Sullivan

Reporting inspector: Ms J McKenna  
2485

Dates of inspection: 23 – 26 September 2002

Inspection number: 249238

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Manor Road  
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Telford  
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr G Clark

Date of previous inspection: 22 November 2000

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2485	J McKenna	Registered Inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9843	S Drake	Lay Inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How good are the curricular opportunities for pupils? – personal and social education</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
23082	G Loach	Team Inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular opportunities for pupils?
19056	G Leech	Team Inspector	English	How well is the school led and managed?
27984	A Whitehall	Team Inspector	Science	How well is the school led and managed? – accommodation and learning resources
4615	M Bostock	Team Inspector	Information and communication technology	How well is the school led and managed? - strategic use of resources/best value
31129	J Pickering	Team Inspector	Art and design	How good are the curricular opportunities for pupils? – spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

11793	I James	Team Inspector	Design and technology	
19026	B Downes	Team Inspector	Geography Special educational needs	
15576	D Nebesnuick	Team Inspector	History Citizenship	
27082	G Henshall	Team Inspector	Modern foreign languages	How well does the school care for its pupils? - assessment
23499	H Seymour	Team Inspector	Music	How well is the school led and managed? - staffing
30198	R Chick	Team Inspector	Physical education Education inclusion English as an additional language	
17269	J Johnson	Team Inspector	Religious education	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Phoenix is an 11-16 comprehensive school situated in Telford, with 733 boys and girls on roll. There are 16 pupils from minority ethnic groups, 12 of whom speak English as an additional language, although none are at early stages of fluency. Twenty one percent of pupils have special educational needs. The criteria for identifying pupils with special educational needs have changed recently and there are no national comparators as yet, but last year the proportion of such pupils was well above average, and it is unlikely to be different this year. The proportion with statements of special educational need is well above average. Most pupils with special educational needs have moderate learning difficulties and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school is situated in an area with significant economic, social and health disadvantage. Over 30 percent of pupils are entitled to free school meals and this is above average. The school is part of Telford and Wrekin Education Action Zone, and is designated as facing challenging circumstances. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below average.

The school was placed in special measures following an inspection in 1998, and came out of special measures in 2000. It received a School Achievement Award in 2000 and more recently a Sportsmark Award. The numbers on roll are rising, and the current Year 7 was over-subscribed.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Phoenix is a fast improving school, now providing a good education for its pupils. Staff and governors have a strong commitment to the pupils and to ensuring a high quality of education for them. Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, and with the full support and involvement of other colleagues, effective action is being taken to continue to develop provision. Teaching is good. The standards attained by pupils, although below the national average, are improving at a faster rate than nationally, and represent good levels of achievement. The school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and senior managers are very effective.
- There is a very strong and shared commitment to raising standards and improving opportunities for pupils.
- A high proportion of teaching is good or better.
- Great respect is shown to pupils and the care and support for them is of high quality.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and relationships are very good.
- Pupils' personal development is well provided for.
- The standards pupils attain are rising.

#### **What could be improved**

- The provision for religious education is unsatisfactory and the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements.
- The provision for art is unsatisfactory.
- Middle management processes are not as systematic or as rigorous as those at senior level.
- Whole school health and safety procedures are not comprehensive enough.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good progress since its previous inspection in 1998. The decline in GCSE results has been reversed and standards attained by pupils at the end of Years 9 and 11 are now improving faster than nationally. Pupils' achievement has improved from poor to good, and all pupils leave school with a recognised qualification. There is much less unsatisfactory teaching and much more that is good. Pupils now behave well. There have been a wide range of other improvements, such as to the curriculum and to assessment procedures. Leadership and management are very effective. These improvements have been brought about at the same time as a significant reduction in a deficit budget, which is due to be cleared this year. The school now provides good value for money. There is a very accurate understanding of the action necessary to improve the school further, and a strong capacity to bring this about.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations. (National comparative figures for 2002 have not yet been published).

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	D	well above average    A above average        B average                C below average        D well below average    E

The standards now attained by pupils at the Phoenix school are mainly below the national average, but given that they enter the school with standards well below average, this represents good levels of achievement for pupils in most subjects. Standards are rising at a faster rate than nationally.

The test results of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2001 in English, mathematics and science were well below the national average. In most other subjects, teacher assessments in 2001 were also well below the national figures, the exceptions being in music where they were below average, and in information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education where they were average. The 2002 results show a considerable increase in almost all subjects, the only exceptions being in art and design and music, where results declined. During the inspection, average standards were being maintained in ICT and physical education. Standards were well below average in art and well below the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus in religious education. In other subjects standards were below the national average, that is higher than the 2001 results indicate and more in line with the improved standards in 2002.

In 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades and the average points score at GCSE was well below the national average. However, the proportion gaining five or more A\*-G grades was above the national average, and the proportion gaining one or more A\*-G grades was in line with the national average. The 2002 GCSE results are higher, and are the school's best ever. Results improved in all subjects except mathematics, which declined by one percentage point, and art. Results in the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) course in ICT, and in GCSE geography and German were particularly positive, albeit with small numbers of pupils entering the latter two subjects. Results in the GNVQ course in business were low. Standards of work seen during the inspection mainly reflect the improved standards of 2002. In the GCSE ICT option group standards are above average, and in the physical education option group are just slightly below average. Standards in art and design are well below average and in religious education are well below the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus, but in all other subjects, including English, mathematics and science, are below average.

The standards that pupils are now attaining represent good levels of achievement overall. This is the case for all subjects in Years 7 to 9, except for religious education and art and design where achievements are unsatisfactory. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good in all of their subjects except for ICT where it is very good, mathematics, art and design and design technology where



it is satisfactory and religious education where it is unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. There is no difference in the attainment of pupils of different ethnic groups. Those who speak English as an additional language have sufficient fluency to make similar progress to their peers. Gender differences are less pronounced than found nationally.

The school is very committed to raising pupils' standards of attainment, and sets appropriately challenging targets for doing so.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are proud to attend Phoenix, and their attitudes towards all that the school has to offer are positive.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Pupils of different ages, abilities and ethnicity respect each other and mix well. Pupils are keen to take on responsibility and carry duties out well. Some pupils lack confidence.
Attendance	Satisfactory overall, although the attendance of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is lower than for other pupils.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 19 out of 20 lessons. It is good or better in three out of four lessons, and is very good or better in almost three out of ten, with some excellent teaching seen. It is unsatisfactory in just under one in 20 lessons. Some very good teaching is seen in most subjects. Teaching is good overall in all subjects including English, mathematics and science, with the exceptions of physical education where it is very good and art and design and religious education where it is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching is similar for pupils of all ages.

Strengths include teachers' good subject knowledge, well prepared lessons and a good range of activities that capture pupils' interest and deepens their understanding. In the best lessons, teachers' enthusiasm makes lessons stimulating and more active involvement of pupils develops their confidence and ability to work independently. Work is well matched to pupils' prior attainment and accommodates their different needs well. Teachers' manage pupils very well through a combination of quiet authority and good-humoured, high quality relationships based on clear respect for all pupils, whatever their ability, ethnicity or home language. Most teachers manage pupils' behaviour skillfully. Pupils trust their teachers and work hard to meet their expectations. Very occasionally, introductions are too long and activities do not demand active enough involvement of pupils, which means that they are less interested and engaged in their learning. In the small number of unsatisfactory lessons teachers do not use their specialist knowledge to ensure that pupils gain adequate knowledge and understanding of the subject and pupils' behaviour is not always sufficiently well managed.

Overall, the effectiveness of the strategies for teaching literacy skills is good and for numeracy is satisfactory. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Broad and balanced overall. Inclusion of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 is positive, but not all statutory requirements are met. Provision for ICT is much improved.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Teachers and learning support assistants know the pupils well and provide appropriate work and effective support. Individual education plans are good but subject specific targets are under-developed.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language are fluent and do not require specialist support. They make similar progress to their peers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Personal, social and health education is good. Provision for social and moral development is very good. Provision for cultural and spiritual development is satisfactory, although the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Care and support for pupils is of high quality with very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and attendance. The Inclusion Centre is very effective. Although the school is generally a safe environment, procedures for ensuring health and safety are unsatisfactory. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress are good.

The school works hard to foster its relationships with parents and is growing more successful at involving them in their children's education.

Extra curricular activities are good. Statutory requirements for religious education in Years 10 and 11 are not met, and procedures for disapplying the National Curriculum for pupils not studying a modern foreign language and design technology in Years 10 and 11 are not followed as is statutorily required, although these regulations will change at the end of the current academic year.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides excellent leadership and gives very clear educational direction to all, supported well by very effective senior managers. Subject leadership and management are mainly good.
How well the governors fulfill their responsibilities	Governors are very knowledgeable and well informed and have made an important contribution to developing the school though the recent period of change. Some statutory requirements are not met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is very good monitoring of performance, including of teaching, at senior level – it is not yet as strong at middle management level.
The strategic use of resources	There is excellent financial management. Allocation of resources is closely linked to educational priorities.

Staffing is good; although there have been difficulties in recruiting to some posts recently, great efforts are made to ensure high quality appointments. Accommodation is good overall, with positive features

such as the pleasant site and very good facilities for physical education. Deficiencies exist, such as insufficient science laboratories, but action is being taken to address these. Learning resources are satisfactory or better in all subjects except for design technology. The school applies the principles of best value in its work. The statutory requirements that are not met are those relating to the curriculum in Years 10 and 11, the provision of a daily act of collective worship, implementation of performance management, health and safety, and reporting on the success of the special educational needs policy in the annual report to parents.

## **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school expects pupils to work hard.</li> <li>• Parents feel comfortable approaching the school.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Their children are making good progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount and quality of homework given to pupils.</li> <li>• The behaviour of pupils.</li> <li>• Information about the curriculum and what their children will be studying.</li> </ul>

The parents' positive views of the school are well founded. Pupils are expected to work hard and they make good progress. The school is very well led and managed, and contact with parents is welcomed and actively sought. The views of individual parents on homework varied widely. The inspection findings are that provision is satisfactory. The behaviour of pupils is good. Although the school provides good general information for parents, more could be provided on what pupils are studying in their lessons and about the curriculum.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Standards have risen since the last inspection and are continuing to rise at a faster rate than nationally. Pupils still enter the school with levels of attainment that are well below the national average. The standards they are now attaining at the end of Years 9 and 11 are below the national average overall, and represent good achievement in most subjects.
2. The test results of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2001 in English, mathematics and science were well below the national average. In comparison with similar schools, the results in English were below average, and in mathematics and science were well below average. The 2002 results show a considerable increase in all three subjects, and standards are rising at a faster rate than nationally. The standards in English, mathematics and science during the inspection were below national expectations, that is higher than the 2001 results indicate and more in line with the improved standards in 2002.
3. In most other subjects, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were also well below the national figures. The exceptions were in music where they were below average, and in information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education where they were average. In 2002, there was a considerable improvement in most subjects. The higher standards were maintained in ICT and PE, and in almost all other subjects results rose to being below, rather than well below, average. The only exceptions were in art and music, where results declined. Standards of work seen during the inspection in most subjects confirm the upward trend. They were average in ICT and physical education, well below average in art and below average in all other subjects. There are no national tests or assessments in religious education and standards seen during the inspection were well below the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus.
4. Standards are also rising at GCSE – the average points score gained by pupils has risen steadily over the past six years. In 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades and the average points score were well below the national average. However, the proportion gaining five or more grades at A\*-G was above the national average, and the proportion gaining one or more A\*-G grades, was in line with the national average. All pupils left school with a recognised qualification. While the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades was well below similar schools and the average points score was below similar schools, those gaining A\*-G grades compared very favourably, being well above similar schools. Results in most categories were higher than in 2000, although the A\*-C grades were lower. This dip was due mainly to the fact that the group of pupils taking GCSEs in 2001 included a significant proportion who had entered the school during Years 10 and 11, many of whom arrived with difficulties and a history of poor attendance. The GCSE results in 2002 were higher, and are the school's best ever. Results improved in all subjects except mathematics, which declined by one percentage point, and art and design. Results in the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) course in ICT and in the GCSE courses in geography and German were particularly positive, although some of these groups had small numbers of pupils. Results in the GNVQ course in business were low.

5. Standards of work seen during the inspection mainly reflect the improved standards of 2002. The standards attained by pupils in ICT for those who choose to study the subject as a GCSE option are above average, and for those choosing to study physical education as a GCSE option are just slightly below average. Standards in art and design are well below average and in RE are well below the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus, but in all other subjects, including English, mathematics and science, are below average.
6. Given that pupils enter the school with levels of attainment well below the national average, the standards they are now attaining represent good levels of achievement overall. This is the case for all subjects in Years 7 to 9, except for religious education and art where achievements are unsatisfactory. The achievements of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are good in all of their subjects except for maths, art and design and design technology where it is satisfactory and religious education where it is unsatisfactory.
7. Pupils of all ages with special educational needs achieve good standards in relation to their prior attainment and make good progress towards their individual targets. All leave school with a recognised qualification. Of the eight pupils with statements in Year 11 in 2002, six achieved at least five or more or GCSEs at A\*-G, and five of them achieved seven or more. There is no difference in the attainment of pupils of different ethnic groups. Those who speak English as an additional language have sufficient fluency to make similar progress to their peers. Overall, gender differences in attainment are less marked than found nationally. Although girls perform better than boys overall, boys do better than girls relative to the national picture. The school attributes this to low aspirations for girls in the local community. The school intends to focus upon addressing the gender differences that exist within subjects in the future.
8. Pupils enter the school with standards of literacy and numeracy that are well below average. There is good attention given to promoting pupils' literacy skills within English and in other subjects. As a result, pupils' literacy skills improve and standards of literacy across the curriculum are generally below national expectations but good in relation to pupils' levels of prior attainment. The mathematics department develops pupils' numeracy skills well and there is some promotion and use of these skills in other subjects, although there is no whole school approach to doing so yet. Pupils' numeracy skills improve during their time in school, but they are still below average.
9. The rising standards are due to the positive impact of improvements in practice within the school, especially better teaching, improved behaviour management, developments in the curriculum, improvements in assessment procedures and greater support for pupils. These are contributing to pupils developing more positive attitudes to learning and greater application to their studies. The school is very committed to raising pupils' standards of attainment further, and sets appropriately challenging targets for doing so.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

10. Phoenix is now a happy school which its pupils are proud to attend. Since the time of the previous inspection pupils' attitudes towards school and education have improved greatly, their behaviour is better, the good-natured relationships that were noted then now extend throughout the school and the whole atmosphere is one of contentment and security. This is achieved through the hard work, good example and high expectations of staff and the willingness of pupils to accept individual and collective responsibility for the well being of their community. The improvements in pupils' attitudes make a large contribution towards the rising standards of their work.

11. Pupils like attending the school and they make good use of what it has to offer. For example, at any one time around fifty attend the computer club which runs before and after school and many involve themselves in sports activities. There are very few non-participants in physical education lessons, even among the older pupils who have not chosen to study this subject as one of their GCSE options. Pupils of different abilities, age groups and ethnicity mix together well and demonstrate similarly positive attitudes, with younger pupils showing particular enthusiasm in lessons and increasing numbers of older ones looking forward to continuing their education after the age of sixteen. All those spoken with expressed positive opinions about the school. Pupils wear their uniform in a smart manner and the great majority of them take good care with the presentation of their work. They are keen to be chosen as prefects or as mentors for younger pupils or school council members and they carry out their duties responsibly, although some pupils have yet to develop the confidence to initiate activities or lead events. This lack of belief in themselves also shows itself in lessons where pupils almost always co-operate well with teachers, follow their instructions, work quietly and conscientiously but are sometimes too dependent on them to explain each step and guide their thinking.
12. Since the previous inspection the number of exclusions, both permanent and for a fixed period, has reduced considerably, despite the increase in the number of pupils on roll and relatively high numbers who join the school other than in Year 7, and this sanction is only used in extreme instances when all other routes have been tried. The Inclusion Centre, now in its third year, has proved very beneficial as both a support for and a means of disciplining pupils and, as a result, behaviour throughout the school is good. For pupils whose special educational needs are because of behavioural difficulties, the good support systems in place enable them to improve their behaviour and make good progress towards their targets. Movement around the site is orderly, with pupils behaving particularly well in the cramped areas near stairways, and the behaviour in assemblies and at break times is civilised and sensible. Pupils respond very well to the consistent and positive manner in which staff encourage them to behave well, although it was clear on the few occasions when teachers' behaviour management was weaker that the potential for disruption is still there. Pupils, staff and parents all agree that standards of behaviour have improved greatly over recent years and that learning is now interrupted on only very few occasions.
13. The quality of relationships throughout the school is very good, with all those spoken to agreeing that, despite the occasional falling out, there is no serious bullying, racism or other forms of harassment. Good humour and banter are regular features of school life with pupils showing a suitable awareness of just how far they can go with staff. The previous report noted that "verbal abuse is not uncommon" but this is certainly a thing of the past. In contrast pupils are instinctively polite, appreciating the respect with which staff treat them, and they listen well to others' opinions or beliefs for example, Buddhist views on meditation. Pupils respond well and sensitively to, for instance, the war poetry and letters of Rupert Brook and they value others' efforts and skills, spontaneously applauding others' work. They express their feelings without fear of being laughed at and are generous in their support of others less fortunate than themselves. Year 7 pupils last year raised an astonishing £1700 for Lepra through a sponsored aerobics session.
14. Pupils' overall levels of attendance are satisfactory and this represents a big improvement since the time of the previous inspection when they were four percentage points below the national average. However, the overall attendance of pupils in Years 10 and 11 was less than ninety per cent in the most recent academic year, which is unsatisfactory. Throughout the school last year, only two thirds of pupils achieved

attendance above ninety per cent. This means that one third had the equivalent of at least half a day each week absence from school, which had an inevitable impact on the rate of their progress.

15. Where the greatest improvement has been made since the previous inspection is in the numbers of pupils who have very poor attendance. For example, last year only around one pupil in each year group attended for less than fifty percent of possible time and all Year 11 pupils attended sufficiently to gain at least one GCSE qualification. The school has rightly identified as the next focus for attention those pupils whose attendance falls just below the ninety per cent mark and, if it continues to be successful in its efforts, the overall percentages should increase noticeably. Attendance levels in the first few weeks of the current term show promising improvements with all year groups except Year 11 being well above ninety percent. Levels of unauthorised absence have decreased to around the national average but there are still too many pupils who are taken on holiday during term-time – fifteen during the week of inspection – or whose parents allow them to stay away for inappropriate reasons. There are some latecomers in the morning, but this is partly attributable to the recent change to the time that the school day starts. At other times of the day pupils arrive promptly to lessons.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

16. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection. At that time teaching was unsatisfactory in three out of ten lessons and was good in only three out of ten. Now, teaching is satisfactory or better in 19 out of 20 lessons. It is good or better in three out of four lessons, and is very good or better in almost three out of ten with some excellent teaching seen. It is unsatisfactory in just under one in 20 lessons. This is a much improved situation. Some very good teaching was seen in most subjects. Teaching is good overall in all subjects, including English, mathematics and science, with the exceptions of physical education where it is very good and art and design and religious education where it is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching is similar for pupils of all ages.
17. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and they use it to prepare lessons that capture pupils' interest. In most lessons teachers ensure a good range of activities that deepens pupils' understanding well. Lessons are usually well paced with pupils fully engaged and involved throughout. In the best lessons, the range of activities not only ensures that pupils develop their knowledge and understanding, but demands their active involvement through, for example, discussion, role play and practical tasks and by doing so develops their confidence, ability to think for themselves and to solve problems. In these very good lessons, teachers demonstrate great enthusiasm for their subjects resulting in lessons that are lively and stimulating and which make learning fun, such as in English where the learning of long and short vowel sounds was made into a game, and in music where the taking of the register was turned into a musically significant and enjoyable activity through the controlling of the tempo and dynamics of pupils' responses. The objectives of lessons are usually made clear at the beginning of lessons so that pupils are clear about what they are to learn, and progress made is consolidated well at the end. In many lessons, such as in physical education and information communication technology, pupils are encouraged and given the skills to evaluate their own learning perceptively. The needs of different pupils are accommodated well through teachers ensuring that work is well matched to prior attainment. There are appropriate levels of challenge for higher attaining pupils, and good support for pupils with special educational needs. A strong feature of the large majority of lessons is the high quality of relationships. Teachers manage pupils very



well through a combination of quiet authority and good-humoured relationships that demonstrate clear respect for pupils. Teachers support pupils very well through positive feedback and make good attempts to boost their confidence. All pupils, whatever their ability, ethnicity or home language are treated equally and with sensitivity. Pupils respond very well to this; they trust their teachers and work hard to meet their expectations. Most teachers manage pupils' behaviour skillfully. There is some good use of resources, particularly ICT, and some good display, such as in mathematics and design technology, also helps to consolidate pupils' learning. Provision for homework is satisfactory.

18. In the small proportion of less successful lessons, the above features are not so evident. Occasionally introductions or explanations are too long and activities do not demand enough active involvement of pupils. As a result, pupils are less interested and engaged in their learning and lessons proceed at a slower pace. In these lessons pupils' independent learning skills are not developed adequately. Many pupils lack confidence in themselves and their abilities, and are sometimes too dependent on their teachers. On occasions, despite the teachers' very best efforts, pupils are reluctant to answer questions or contribute to discussion. However, sometimes teachers do not do enough to encourage pupils to participate, for example by only accepting answers from those pupils who volunteer. While there are many good examples of marking, some does not give pupils clear feedback on the quality of their work or precise information on how they might improve it.
19. Where teaching is unsatisfactory teachers do not use their specialist knowledge to ensure that pupils gain adequate knowledge and understanding of the subject. This is because learning objectives are not clearly and precisely enough identified, or because input and explanations to pupils lack focus. Work is not well enough matched to pupils' prior attainment in these lessons. In addition, pupils' behaviour is not always adequately managed, or pupils do not remain closely enough on task because the teacher's expectations of their behaviour are not made clear to them.
20. Overall, the effectiveness of strategies for teaching literacy skills is good. In the English department literacy development follows the national literacy framework and is integral to the teaching of the subject. Pupils' speaking and listening, reading and writing skills are effectively promoted. There is a whole school policy on literacy and subject departments contribute to the development of pupils' skills, for example through displaying and emphasising the use of key words. In a number of subjects, frameworks are used to help pupils to organise their writing. There is a common marking policy across the curriculum identifying and correcting mistakes in the use of language. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. The mathematics curriculum for Years 7 to 9 has been rewritten to comply with the numeracy framework and good attention is given to developing pupils' skills. Numeracy skills are drawn on in several other subjects. Where this is the case teachers give the guidance necessary to enable pupils to apply their skills appropriately. There is no whole school policy for developing numeracy to guide this work and ensure consistency of approach, although one is planned.
21. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Work that is tailored to the requirements of pupils with special educational needs in lessons is effective. Individual education plans are good, although planning to meet the targets they contain across the curriculum is under-developed. Teachers and learning support assistants know the pupils well and work well together to meet their needs. Learning support assistants provide very effective and caring support for pupils.

## HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

22. There have been several positive developments to the curriculum since the previous inspection. There is greater time and attention given to improving pupils' basic skills, particularly literacy. Provision for ICT is much improved. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 has been broadened to include vocational and work-related courses. Almost all courses are now accredited with the exception of the ICT module that pupils study in Years 10 and 11. Overall, the curriculum is broad and balanced. However, not all statutory requirements are met for the provision of subjects in Years 10 and 11.
23. The quality and range of opportunities for learning provided by the school in Years 7, 8 and 9 are satisfactory because the appropriate statutory curriculum is fully in place and possesses satisfactory breadth, balance and relevance. More time has been allocated to the teaching of English, mathematics and science than is usual for pupils in these year groups to enable greater attention to be given to promoting their basic skills, and, especially in literacy, this is starting to have a positive impact. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, have access to the full range of courses and activities.
24. The curriculum on offer for pupils in Years 10 and 11 has satisfactory breadth and balance, with the extension of choice through the introduction of vocational courses being a positive feature. However, the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education are not covered in full, as is statutorily required, and this is unsatisfactory. Furthermore, the study of a modern foreign language and design technology are optional, and the school has not followed the procedures to disapply the National Curriculum requirements for pupils not taking these subjects, which is in breach of existing statutory requirements, although these regulations are changing.
25. The school offers a variety of vocational courses in conjunction with local colleges, which provide a good range of opportunities for pupils with different needs. The vocational studies certificated, entry level course, provides a very good option for pupils who would find it difficult to cope with the rigours of a full complement of GCSE and/ or GNVQ courses. The course is delivered at Telford College of Arts and Technology where, unusually, school and college staff work alongside each other. It is well organised, relevant and well delivered with the result that pupils are motivated to learn and increase both their range of skills and their self-esteem.
26. The school has invested heavily in improving resources for ICT across the school to good effect. The school now meets statutory requirements for ICT as a subject in its own right, and for the use of it in other subjects, which it did not at the previous inspection. This represents very good progress since then. Considerable use is made of the ICT rooms outside of normal lesson times with the range of activities providing support for all curriculum areas.
27. Links with local schools, businesses and other organisations make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Vocational course staff, in particular, have established good links with local businesses some of whom, for example, use pupils to conduct market research projects while others help them to understand the health and safety requirements related to, for instance, an ice rink or a garden centre. A large hotel chain contributes to the leisure and recreational modules of the Vocational Studies course and also runs a certificated mentoring programme for all Year 10 pupils, as part of their PSHE studies, which provides them with guidance on making job applications and experience in undertaking mock interviews. More than twenty firms contribute to pupils' education, quite apart from those involved in work experience. Increasingly close

relationships are developing with the local police and some pupils benefit from mentoring by students from a neighbouring university. Local college staff are present at parents' and options meetings and give presentations to pupils, and some pupils attend regular mathematics sessions at one college. The school has developed good pastoral links with its feeder primary schools and has correctly identified the need to strengthen the liaison between subject leaders in the different institutions to ensure that pupils experience a smooth transition in their subject learning.

28. Careers education, and preparation for two weeks work experience in Year 10, form part of the personal, social and health (PSHE) programme and are proving to be effective, with increasing numbers of pupils choosing to progress to further education after leaving Phoenix. All Year 10 and 11 pupils participate in the STEPS Readiness for Work programme, completing activity logs and there is appropriate liaison with the Connexions agency, with particular support being provided for lower attaining pupils. The careers library is attractive and accessible but there is little evidence that many pupils use either it or the networked commercial computer program in their own time to support their decisions about what they will do when they leave school.
29. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, with very good provision for sport where the take up from girls is outstanding. Sports teams are well supported with pupils having opportunities to participate in competitive team games and gain representative honours. Homework and reading clubs are regular after-school activities, which are supporting the school's drive to raise standards. The ICT facilities are heavily used out of lesson hours. There is a weekly drama club, termly drama productions and several theatre visits per year. A wide range of educational visits take place and there is strong pupil support for the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Within music, provision is limited. Pupils can attend choral groups, keyboard club, wind band or the popular steel band but participation rates are generally low.
30. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good. The programme for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 includes all the required elements, such as drugs misuse, sex education and citizenship, and contains much guidance for form tutors, who teach the subject. This helps them to feel confident in subject areas where they might not be experts but also allows them to choose the specific lesson content and teaching style with which they feel most comfortable. The programme for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is equally comprehensive but is delivered on a rotational basis by subject specialists. All pupils have opportunities to enjoy, for instance, visits from theatre groups and the chosen themes, such as 'ground rules' for Year 7 or the realities of money management for Year 11 are highly relevant to the pupils' experience and, therefore, engage their interest and concentration. All the lessons observed were at least satisfactory and the great majority were good or better. New assessment procedures are in place for Years 7, 8 and 9 but staff have yet to develop a method of recording the progress that older pupils make in their personal and skills development during their last two years at school.
31. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved since the previous inspection. The school provides guidelines on promoting it, and teachers are asked to highlight how they are doing this in their lesson plans. This is recorded in schemes of work, and is monitored by senior managers.

32. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is now satisfactory. The school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for pupils, and, although the assemblies that take place are worthwhile experiences for pupils, not all contain the opportunity for spiritual reflection. However, assembly themes for the year are planned to give pupils opportunities to consider issues such as poverty, justice and equality. Two assemblies seen gave opportunities for pupils to reflect on the wonders of the physical world and the good-natured friendships generated at the recent World Cup in Japan and Korea. Themes introduced in assemblies are continued into form periods although the quality of how this is carried out is inconsistent. Pupils are given opportunities to express their personality in art, music and drama. Drama projects centred on bullying promote understanding of feelings and motivation, while careers advice raises ambition and aspiration. The physical education department positively encourages pupils to raise their expectations and extend themselves: there are good displays in which sportspeople who have achieved international success are pointed out as role models. Pupils reflect on the power and wonder of nature in geography where they consider the lifestyles of others and produce good writing about the emotions of people caught up in volcanic eruptions.
33. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good and is evident in the pupils' care and respect for each other and the school environment. Tutorial periods encourage pupils to celebrate the success of others in the group and to develop a sense of belonging to a caring society. Time is devoted to recognising the desirability of helping people less fortunate than themselves, and discussing the merits of worthy charities. This is accompanied by action, with good sums raised for charities. In English the pupils make a study of the human condition through the study of literature such as "The Tempest" and "The Crucible". A module of work in religious education on business ethics requires pupils to consider the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees. Wall displays in science illustrate the recent world conference on the environment, clearly defining issues such as energy conservation and providing strong guidance between right and wrong, guidance carried so clearly into physical education where pupils' sense of fair-play is very apparent. An introduction to the moral challenges posed by information technology and Internet access, data protection and the privacy of the individual, encourage pupils to consider difficult decisions. Year 7 pupils undertake a project requiring insight into the implications and consequences of telling lies. Geography covers a consideration of the effects of industrialisation on Third World countries and the need for a sensitive response to different people's views. A lesson delivered as part of the PSHE programme dealing with discrimination and harassment in education, employment and housing opened pupils' eyes to citizenship, moral and social issues and in particular their rights and responsibilities. The lesson was challenging; it deepened pupils' understanding and concern about the potential difficulties that their own friends from minority ethnic groups may face.
34. The provision for pupils' social development is also very good. Pupils quickly learn to work together through curricular initiatives such as the business enterprise projects in Year 7. The large range of extra-curricular activities, including sport and outdoor education opportunities, encourage teamwork. There is very strong social provision in physical education where pupils get on well and support one another. This is extended to pupils in other schools, where pupils taking GCSE in physical education manage sports activities in primary schools. Pupils discuss issues and work well together in geography, although they miss a certain social element due to the lack of field courses. Teachers are good role models, as are some adults from outside the school such as those who participate in the mentoring scheme. Some pupils, in turn, develop contacts with pupils in Year 6 in primary schools to help ease their transition into the school. There is a prefect system through which Year 11 pupils take on meaningful roles of

responsibility, which helps create a community spirit. The successful school council provides a forum through which pupils can interact in a more formal manner, with positive outcomes for others. For example, following discussion at the council, a system of financial rewards was introduced in Years 10 and 11, funded by a regular raffle organized by the council. The school places considerable importance on pupils' leisure time at break and during the lunch hour, and the school is pressing for more social areas to be incorporated into the plans for new buildings.

35. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Attention is given to promoting this in some subjects of the curriculum. Very good displays in the mathematics department feature Islamic patterns representing infinity accompanied by background information. English makes a significant contribution through literature, especially poetry, building knowledge and understanding of human aspirations and achievements, moral dilemmas, respect for others and the environment. Some multicultural poetry is studied for GCSE while World War 1 poetry studied in Year 9 examines the horror and morality of war. A thought provoking display depicting the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> in New York City reinforces the message. Drama makes a good contribution. The drama club and GCSE drama pupils presented "Aladdin", a pantomime for senior citizens, while "The Snow Queen" was a whole-school production which also involved primary school children. GCSE pupils study drama texts and enjoy contributions from a range of visitors including two theatre companies and an Indian dancer, adding to pupils' multi-cultural awareness. GCSE pupils are also taken on theatre visits. There is some study of African art and music. Pupils from the art department worked with artists-in-residence and pupils from the other comprehensive schools in Telford to design and construct the Jubilee Column in the town centre. Such good practice is not yet a strong feature of all departments.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

36. One of the school's major strengths is the high quality of care and support that staff members provide for the pupils. Those parents who attended the meeting held prior to the inspection praised the "excellent, sensitive and effective support" and the way that "the school tries to accommodate the special needs of any individual." Pupils spoken with also expressed their appreciation of the way that staff take the time to talk with them and get to know them as individuals, and all said that they would have someone to go to for help if they had a problem. The support systems have become far more cohesive than they were at the time of the previous inspection with the result that pupils are growing in confidence and the school is operating as an increasingly harmonious and businesslike community.
37. Staff put much effort into ensuring that pupils new to the school settle swiftly. Projects such as 'Playing for Success' and the training of Year 9 pupils as mentors for Year 6 help the older pupils to gain in maturity while providing a good support for Year 7 pupils as they find their feet at their new school. Buddies are also provided for those pupils who arrive later in their secondary career and who express some trepidation at the prospect of fitting in. Form tutors act as the lynch-pin for support, wherever possible staying with their forms throughout their school career, but heads of year also have a very good knowledge of the personal and academic progress of the individuals in their care and offer them appropriate support and guidance. Staff are very good at, for instance, finding jobs for vulnerable pupils to do at break times so that they do not feel alone and insecure. Management of the pastoral system and the Inclusion Centre is now in the hands of the same person which means that the different support mechanisms complement each other well. There are simple, clear communication

systems in place which ensure that important information is passed on to all those who have a need to know.

38. The Inclusion Centre is proving extremely successful in balancing its dual purposes of supporting pupils with emotional difficulties and disciplining those who have misbehaved. Those who work there, teachers and support staff, act as a very strong team and have succeeded in establishing a calm and positive atmosphere to which pupils respond well. The provision is highly structured with clarity of expectations for pupils and good record-keeping but it is also sufficiently flexible to cope with pupils who may need close supervision after an outburst of poor behaviour, or one to one counselling, or support in individual main-stream lessons, or a quiet haven to help them grow used to school after a long period of absence. During the most recent academic year Inclusion Centre staff supported eighteen per cent of the school's population.
39. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and attendance are very good. Staff follow well the very clear guidance contained within the behaviour management policy and they are supportive of each other so that they talk through difficulties and think of new strategies to try with individuals rather than struggle on alone. The ethos is one of praise and encouragement but staff are quick to remind pupils of the school's high expectations of behaviour and self-discipline, seldom allowing even minor transgressions to slip by without a remark. They manage to do this without creating an atmosphere of oppression because they always treat pupils with respect, form good relationships with them and show that they enjoy their company. This sense of community and welcome has been instrumental in encouraging pupils to attend school more frequently than in the past as have the school's more formal procedures relating to attendance. These include businesslike registration, first day calls to the parents of pupils who are absent without reason, occasional trawls of the local area looking for absentees, weekly tutor group awards and half-termly individual awards for good attendance. The attendance clerk, education welfare officer, heads of year, Inclusion Centre staff and pastoral manager work together with pupils and parents in an extremely coherent and persistent manner which is proving effective in encouraging pupils to attend school on a regular basis. As with behaviour management, staff are constantly vigilant so that any back-sliding is swiftly noticed and acted upon; this determination and the unusually close partnership between the school and the education welfare officer are particular strengths of the provision.
40. The arrangements to ensure child protection are very good. There is very clear written guidance and regular training for staff about what to do should they have concerns, and any records are kept suitably confidentially. The procedures to support pupils who are in the care of the local authority are similarly good and, in another area of care for pupils, the school has adopted an Internet Safety policy which it puts into practice effectively. The arrangements for dealing with pupils who have accidents or feel unwell are also good, especially the careful noting of incidents in the school's record book and in the pupil's log book so that parents are kept informed. On a day to day basis, the school generally operates as a safe environment but the overall arrangements to ensure health and safety are unsatisfactory. There is no policy identifying responsibilities and practice for this area nor, other than for educational visits and within departments, does the school conduct regular risk assessments. Some specific items of concern, mostly relating to the resistant materials rooms, were highlighted to the school during the inspection.

41. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress are good. The system is constantly under review by the senior management team, who have adopted national, standardised systems from this year, as they promise to yield more information and give a more realistic and reliable picture of pupil attainment than previously. A wealth of data is well analysed and used to monitor pupils' progress, inform support needs and agree targets for improvement. Refinements to the system are made to provide more detailed information, for instance in splitting each national curriculum level into 3 stages to enable a closer monitoring of progress. There is an impressive record of individual pupils' attainments, the analysis of which clearly identifies any special needs. Rigorous progress checks allow year heads to identify those who deserve commendation, as well as those who are underachieving. Once under-achieving pupils in Years 10 and 11 have been identified, they are offered mentoring by an outside body under the terms of the Education Action Zone. Pupils who are expected to gain 5 A\*-C grades receive mentoring support from the senior management team to ensure that they remain on target. Departments offer coursework support for those pupils who find difficulty in adapting to independent working and the need for good personal organisation. Progress charts also inform whether each subject is achieving above or below their target. In individual departments there are examples of very good practice. In English and science, for example, there is some frequent and consistent testing, with opportunities for pupils to redraft extended work after constructive feedback from teachers. Good practice occurs also in German, history and ICT. However, there is some scope for improvement in assessment in most subjects. Since the last inspection pupils have become more aware of the significance of their national curriculum or GCSE levels and their effort grades. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is satisfactory overall.
42. There are good procedures in place for identifying pupils with special educational needs and for arranging the necessary provision for them. Arrangements for tracking attainment and progress for pupils are also good. All teachers and learning support staff regularly complete assessments. These supply consistent information that is used to complete half-termly reviews of pupils' progress towards their targets and to adjust targets if necessary. This contributes to raising standards.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

43. Parents' views of the school have improved greatly since the time of the previous inspection, particularly with regard to the standard of pupils' behaviour and the way in which the school is helping their children to grow in maturity. Parents are very impressed by the current leadership and management and they appreciate the openness of staff. They say that staff "always get back to them" if they have raised a query and that they keep in contact if a problem is on-going.
44. The school works hard to foster its partnership with parents and carers and, wherever possible, tries to include them in their children's education. Pastoral staff regularly send letters home informing parents about their child's successes and awards, and the school also has termly communication with parents about their child's academic progress and effort. Pupils' log books are a good, day to day, method of communication between home and school. Parents appreciate the special meetings with staff, such as those relating to GCSE option choices or for Year 7 parents to discuss how well their child has settled in to their new school, and they are beginning to attend such meetings in increasing numbers. With the new monitoring procedures that are in place, the parents of some Year 7 pupils whose progress is causing concern will be contacted even before the October meeting and invited in to discuss with staff and

their child how they can work together to improve things. Such pro-active communication is very good practice.

45. The prospectus and governors' annual report are very welcoming to parents and the termly newsletter 'Phoenix Blaze' gives them a good feel of what is happening in school but, as yet, few departments provide parents with information about what their children, particularly those in Years 7, 8 and 9, will be studying in the coming term. At the meeting held prior to inspection, parents volunteered that they would appreciate more guidance about expected levels of attainment for different age groups. This desire for more information has also been highlighted in the school's own surveys of parental opinion. Pupils' written reports comply with requirements in that they quantify their attainment and progress in each subject and identify targets for improvement but most of the comments and targets are not sufficiently subject specific to help pupils pinpoint exactly what it is that they need to do next in order to improve. "Ask questions to develop your understanding," could relate to any subject in any year group rather than Year 8 science to which it was directed.
46. Parents are reluctant to become actively involved in school life but most of them are interested in supporting their own child's education. Attempts in the past to set up a parents' association have come to nothing, although renewed efforts this term are proving successful in establishing a core group on which to build. The great majority of parents will respond to requests from school to discuss concerns and they are supportive of, for instance, fund-raising activities such as the sponsored walk for the mini-bus. There are satisfactory formal and informal contacts with parents of pupils who have special educational needs. Parents and pupils are always invited to attend the annual review and target setting process, with most, but not all, parents participating. One or two parents give valuable help in school, not least with ICT.
47. It is clear, through surveys of opinion and the improving levels of attendance of pupils at school and parents at meetings, that the school is growing more successful in its efforts to involve parents in their children's education. The fact that they are asking for more information implies that their interest is increasing and the school needs to capitalise on this in its efforts to strengthen the partnership further.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

48. The leadership and management of the school are very good overall. The headteacher has a very clear understanding of educational priorities, and has given excellent leadership and provided very clear direction to the school through a period of great difficulty. He has been very well supported by senior managers who have made a very good contribution to the development of a successful school. Since the last inspection, by all indicators, the direction in which the school was moving has been reversed. The success of the school is clearly demonstrated by the approval expressed by parents for leadership and management in the inspection questionnaire, and by the growing number of pupils applying for entry to Year 7, which is now oversubscribed.
49. There is an ethos of confidence growing out of mutual respect between teachers and pupils and an excellent shared commitment to providing the best educational opportunities in an environment of high quality care and support. Care for pupils is a strength of the school. The number of exclusions is reducing, attendance is improving and a variety of strategies for improving behaviour have been adopted. These include a strong and active rewards system, a programme of behaviour management and the development of an Inclusion Centre. Relationships in the school, between pupils and with their teachers, are very good. Equality of opportunity is a strong feature of the



school. It is a secure and inclusive environment for learning where pupils behave well and there is an absence of bullying, sexism and racism.

50. Since the last inspection, the school development plan has become much more sharply focused, in a format which both identifies appropriate priorities for development of key aspects of the school and provides the necessary detail on resources, success criteria, monitoring and evaluation. Departmental development plans in all subjects follow the same format, with issues, action, and success criteria. An annual review analyses progress in considerable detail, with a clear indication of future action to be taken.
51. There is a very good programme for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning by senior managers, clearly aimed at raising standards of attainment and improving the quality of teaching and learning. There is a cycle of regular whole-school reviews involving local education authority (LEA) officers and governors as well as regular departmental reviews both by LEA subject advisers and, separately, by the senior management team, which include lesson observations. The school has not fully implemented the statutory arrangements for performance management. The first cycle has begun, but the process has been suspended for some time. A great deal is done at whole school level to compile and analyse data about pupils' attainment, to monitor both individual pupil progress and the achievements in subject areas.
52. There is strong commitment to the improvement of the school by middle managers, who contribute to the implementation of the key issues identified in the school development plan. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation, including of teaching, the delivery of the curriculum and the use of data to monitor standards have been to a large extent in the hands of senior managers, however, and processes at subject department level are not yet as rigorous and systematic. To this end, subject leaders have, this term, been relieved of some of their pastoral responsibilities to enable them to monitor more extensively. Leadership and management at this level are good overall, and very good in English, science and physical education, but partly due to staffing difficulties are unsatisfactory in religious education. The management of special educational needs provision is satisfactory. Procedures for implementing the new Code of Practice have been established although the impact on the roles and responsibilities of different groups of staff within the school has not been clarified. Other aspects of the work require development. The subject leader needs to take a greater role in leading other subject managers and teachers in developing action to be taken to meet specific targets of pupils with special educational needs within departments and lessons.
53. There is a high level of educational expertise within the governing body, which is very well informed about the work of the school. It has given very good support through the process of change since the last inspection, through its regular meetings, its initial "key issue" groups and now its formal committees, and has played an important role in shaping the school's development. There is a recognition of how the changes in the school which have been effected have implications for the focus of the governing body and there is a clear vision for the future and plans to move to rigorous monitoring. With the change in focus, it is a time to develop links between individual governors and subject departments or areas of the school. Overall, the governing body performs its duties well, except in the fulfilment of some statutory responsibilities: - the delivery of all the requirements of the national curriculum; the provision of a daily act of worship; the full provision of religious education, compliance with performance management arrangements and health and safety requirements.

54. In the last four years school improvement has had to be managed with a deficit budget, a deficit due to be cleared by the end of this year. At the same time, a high-cost staffing budget, inherited from when the school had a sixth form, has been carefully managed into a more rational and appropriate staffing profile. During this time, and in spite of these budgetary constraints, significant improvements have taken place. This represents excellent financial management over this period. Grants available to the school have been strategically and effectively managed with the aim of transforming the appearance and infrastructure of the building and making the investments that have a positive impact upon learning.
55. Following the last inspection, a finance committee was formed and the school now works to a three-year planning cycle with financial decisions being driven by the priorities for development outlined in the school development plan. Governors believe that they are provided with sufficient financial information with which to exercise their responsibilities in regard to finances. All recommendations made in the last financial audit have been acted upon. The school uses benchmarking information from the local education authority to help monitor its expenditure and compare it with other schools in the area.
56. Ensuring that good value for money is provided is carried out effectively. The school was previously poorly equipped with ICT. An investment in new ICT systems was needed in order to ensure that resourcing for this area was in line with the national average and to enable the use of ICT as a tool for raising standards across the subjects of the curriculum. A specific grant for school improvement was used for this purpose and significant cost savings were made as a result of a well-managed tendering process. In this, and in other examples which include Education Action Zone funding, the school has demonstrated best value in the use of grants.
57. The staffing provision is good overall and has improved since the last inspection. There are sufficient appropriately qualified teachers to meet the needs of the curriculum. Very few lessons are taught by non specialist or unqualified teachers.
58. Although there has been a considerable turnover of staff in recent years, this situation is now stabilising and the school has a committed and capable team of teachers. Difficulty has been experienced in filling some posts, but great efforts have been made to ensure adequate and high quality provision. The quality of staffing has been a key concern of management in its efforts to raise standards. Strategic planning is now underway for staffing related to the proposed increase in numbers in the school.
59. All teachers new to the school follow an induction programme which has common elements and others tailored to the needs of individual staff, and this is appreciated by them. The school has recently established links with an Initial Teacher Training provider in order to enhance professional development for new and existing teachers. Non-teaching staff provide a very good level of support. There is some shortage in clerical and technical personnel but this has been identified and is in hand. The school is fortunate in having a parent who, having received the necessary clearance, works full time on a voluntary basis supporting work in ICT
60. The school is situated on a large pleasant site and the fabric of the building is well maintained. The accommodation is good overall. The facilities for physical education are very good including extensive well-drained playing fields and two indoor sports hall that are shared with the local community. These form part of the new block built on the site of the swimming pool. This also houses a large hall and dining room. General teaching rooms are well appointed and provide a good learning environment. Most are

large but some small rooms cause cramped conditions especially in the technology and one ICT room. A relatively large proportion of science lessons are taught in classrooms in the main teaching block although two more laboratories are due to be built soon. There is no base for the teaching of religious education which results in resources not being readily accessible for lessons. The library is attractive and well-furnished. Resources are satisfactory or better in all subjects and the library except for design technology.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

61. In order to continue to raise standards and improve the quality of provision for pupils, the headteacher, governors and staff should: -

- (1) Improve provision in religious education by : - (*paragraphs 164-169*)
  - Ensuring that the curriculum is planned in appropriate detail for Years 7 to 9;
  - Ensuring that the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 meets the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus;
  - Improving the quality of teaching.
- (2) Improve the quality of provision in art by : - (*paragraphs 93-98*)
  - Improving pupils' basic skills and their skills of research and experimentation;
  - Improving the quality of teaching.
- (3) Improve the quality of middle management processes by : - (*paragraph 52*)
  - Making the monitoring of teaching more systematic and rigorous;
  - Making the analysis and use of pupil performance data to promote improvement more comprehensive;
  - Ensuring that performance management arrangements are fully implemented.
- (4) Produce a whole school health and safety policy and ensure that risk assessments are carried out in full. (*paragraph 40*)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	134
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	52

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	32	65	26	6	0	0
Percentage	4	24	49	19	4	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	733
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	241

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	44
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	153

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	12

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	33
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3

National comparative data	8.1
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National comparative data	1.1
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*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	54	52

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	19	20	26
	Girls	27	17	17
	Total	46	37	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	44 (47)	35 (45)	41 (43)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	15 (19)	23 (19)	13 (13)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	25	20	31
	Girls	29	21	20
	Total	54	41	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	51 (36)	39 (45)	49 (36)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	9 (2)	22 (7)	15 (6)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	56	41

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	9	53	55
	Girls	8	38	40
	Total	17	91	95
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	18 (26)	94 (83)	98 (94)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	28.4
	National	39.0

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	717	38	2
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	8	3
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	5	1	1
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

*The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

### ***Financial information***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	44.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.4

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	406

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70%
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.1
Key Stage 4	20.7

Financial year	2001/02
	£
Total income	2,012,173
Total expenditure	1,982,908
Expenditure per pupil	3,485
Balance brought forward from previous year	-64,580
Balance carried forward to next year	-35,315

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*



### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	16.82
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	29.98
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 4.8%

Number of questionnaires sent out	672
Number of questionnaires returned	32

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	47	50	0	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	63	34	0	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	72	3	6	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	59	22	0	0
The teaching is good.	41	56	0	3	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	53	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	31	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	19	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	47	50	0	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	66	31	0	3	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	38	0	3	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	41	0	3	3

## PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

### ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Relationships in the classroom are good.
- Teaching is good.
- The assessment procedures are very good.
- The leadership and management of the subject are very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Teaching and learning are not yet sufficiently monitored.
- The good practice in the analysis and use of data is limited to years 7 to 9.

62. Standards of attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well below the national average and below the average for similar schools. Pupils' attainment in English was broadly in line with that in mathematics and science. Girls' results were better than those of boys, as they are nationally, but in comparison to national averages for boys and girls, boys' results were better. Standards have risen since the last inspection and the results in 2002 show a further and significant improvement.
63. The standard of work of pupils up to Year 9 seen during the inspection, though generally below national expectations, was better than that indicated by the results of the tests in 2001, and confirms the rising trend and the standard indicated by the 2002 tests. Pupils are mostly attentive if sometimes passive listeners. Higher attaining pupils are articulate, readily answer questions and participate in discussion, as did a Year 9 class exploring the poem "Anthem for Doomed Youth". Pupils of lower levels of prior attainment and with special educational needs respond willingly and in some cases enthusiastically, but their responses are limited – pupils in Year 9 could prepare and present arguments for and against war, for example, but briefly and hesitantly, using simple vocabulary. Pupils are less competent readers than is expected nationally. They can extract information from and respond to texts, though many need help to understand at more than a simple, factual level. Writing skills are generally below national expectations. Pupils are able to complete a good variety of writing, however, through good teacher help and the provision of frameworks– in Year 9, for example, composing an imaginary letter from Wilfred Owen about the First World War. Higher attaining pupils write at length, generally correctly, though spelling can be uncertain. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs write at less length, and have difficulties with spelling, grammar and punctuation.
64. In the GCSE examinations in 2001 the proportions of pupils gaining grades A\* to C in both English and English literature were well below the national average and the average for similar schools. The proportions of pupils gaining grades A\* to G were above the national average however – all pupils entered achieved a grade, and a higher proportion of pupils was entered than is the case nationally. Girls' results were better than those of boys, as they are nationally, but in comparison to national averages for boys and girls, boys' results were better. Since the last inspection there has been an

upward trend in the results, which dipped a little in 2001, but the 2002 results were better – the best of the majority entry subjects – and maintain the rising trend.

65. The standard of work of pupils up to Year 11 seen during the inspection, though generally below national expectations, was better than that indicated by the results in 2001, and confirms the improving attainment. Pupils can listen attentively and contribute sensibly to discussion, but generally contributions are limited. Higher attaining pupils speak confidently and articulately, and read aloud with feeling, but most pupils respond briefly, often only as a consequence of significant encouragement from the teacher. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, pupils only made progress in exploring Carol Ann Duffy's poem "Valentine" through quite strenuous efforts on the teacher's part to engage them in discussion. Pupils study a good range of quite demanding texts but in general need the support of teachers and the worksheets they provide to help their understanding. A Year 11 class made good progress in understanding Dickens' "The Signalman" through good teacher guidance and the provision of a worksheet. Overall, standards of writing are below national expectations, but careful preparation and meticulous drafting processes help pupils meet examination requirements. The vocabulary of the majority is limited; many pupils have an insecure grasp of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Teacher support and writing frameworks offer good assistance, but clearly many pupils are reliant upon it and need to become more independent learners.
66. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment well below the national average. By the end of Year 9, progress in relation to prior attainment is good. Literacy skills are systematically developed through careful attention to the requirements of the new framework for English. Though still below the national average, national test results are improving. By the end of Year 11, pupils continue to make good progress as the result of teachers' attention to the requirements of the GCSE. Pupils profit from detailed marking and the identification of points for development. Achievement across the ability range is good, as a consequence of good support, particularly for pupils of low levels of prior attainment and with special educational needs. The proportion of pupils achieving a grade in GCSE is above the national proportion. The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language have acquired sufficient language competence to make similar progress to that of their peers.
67. The quality of teaching is good overall. It was all satisfactory or better, in half the lessons observed it was good and in a third very good. Pupils' learning is consequently good. Teachers' good knowledge and understanding, particularly of the new framework for English in years 7 to 9, ensure well-planned lessons paying good attention to literacy development. Lessons are mostly well-paced, with a good variety of activities which engage pupils – only very rarely is the pace slow and unstimulating. Teachers accommodate pupils' differing needs with a good range of support materials. The quality of marking is very good, though not entirely consistent across the department. Detailed and constructive comments give pupils clear strategies for improvement. Classes are well-managed - pupils are kept on task, but relationships are good-humoured. Very occasionally, in accepting answers from the most active pupils rather than directing questions at individuals teachers allow some pupils not to participate fully. The best teaching is lively and communicates interest, for example in a Year 7 lesson, when an activity developing understanding of long and short vowel sounds was turned into a game which the pupils enjoyed playing.
68. The accommodation and resources for English are satisfactory – teachers mostly have their own dedicated rooms, though some are too small to allow a variety of group activities and storage space is limited. The scheme of work meets the requirements of

the National Curriculum and of the GCSE examinations, and good progress has been made in incorporating the new framework for teaching in years 7 to 9. There is a good programme of ICT activities – for example, pupils in Year 8 prepare “Powerpoint” presentations - which identifies and fulfils statutory requirements. Pupils’ special educational needs are met through appropriate grouping arrangements and good assistance in the classroom.

69. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has a clear vision of the requirements of the subject and manages a large team of teachers very well, enabling them to share good practice and contribute to the process of planning and development. There is consistency in the delivery of the curriculum and the practice of assessment. Teaching and learning are monitored, but the monitoring could be more extensive and systematic. Data analysis is used well to inform target setting and the modification of teaching strategies for years 7 to 9, and plans are in place to extend that good practice to years 10 and 11.
70. Progress since the last inspection is very good: standards of attainment have risen, the quality of teaching has improved and assessment procedures are very effective.

## **LITERACY**

71. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are generally below national expectations but good in relation to pupils’ levels of prior attainment. Pupils are generally attentive if rather passive listeners. They respond cooperatively to questions and many speak with confidence but often contributions are relatively brief. Pupils can use the technical vocabulary of subjects when required to do so. Reading skills are sufficient to enable pupils to meet the reading requirements of subjects, in the case of pupils of lower levels of prior attainment through the help of suitably adapted worksheets. The standard of pupils’ writing is improving through the help of writing frameworks. Pupils write for a suitable range of purposes and make steady progress towards the extended writing required in many subjects in years 10 and 11. The process of drafting of coursework pieces enables pupils to improve their fluency and accuracy, although spelling and punctuation are often insecure. Handwriting and presentation are generally satisfactory.
72. Overall, the skills of literacy are taught well. Pupils enter the school with standards of literacy which are well below national expectations. The need to develop those standards to meet the literacy demands of the whole curriculum is recognised in a school policy. There is good practice, informed by staff in-service training. The English department has revised its scheme of work fully to accommodate the new literacy strategy for pupils in years 7 to 9, and oracy, reading and writing are integral to the programme of study. Subject departments display and emphasise the use of key words. In a number of subjects, frameworks are used to help pupils to organise their writing. There is a common marking policy across the curriculum identifying and correcting mistakes in the use of language. Overall, the effectiveness of the strategies for teaching literacy skills is good. In English, literacy development is integral to the teaching of the subject. Teachers are identified in other subjects to liaise with the newly-appointed literacy coordinator and build upon and disseminate the good practice which exists.

## MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Strengths

- Shared commitment to raising of attainment.
- Quality of teaching in the classroom.
- Very good relationships.
- Use of learning support assistants.

### Areas for Improvement

- Monitoring of teacher performance.
- Quality of marking.
- Use of ICT.

73. Standards attained in National Curriculum tests in the year 2001 by pupils at the end of Year 9 were well below the national average and also well below average when compared with similar schools. Within the school, the standards achieved in mathematics were similar to those achieved in English and in science. Boys' attainment was marginally above that of girls' attainment. The trend of improvement, although below the national trend, indicates a steady rise in standards since the previous inspection. In 2002 the test results were significantly better than those of the previous year and the highest that the school has recorded in mathematics.
74. In work seen during the inspection pupils' attainment by the age of 14 is below national expectations, with standards in line with those indicated by the 2002 tests results. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special education needs, demonstrate understanding of number patterns although they have difficulty in retaining information. Pupils outside of the top sets have difficulty with algebraic manipulation. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 were observed working at Level 6 as they demonstrated good skills in exploring quadratic number sequences. They were able to recognize the rules determining a sequence and could obtain the general term. These pupils also have a good understanding of statistical methods and are able to use and interpret appropriate charts and diagrams.
75. The percentage of pupils obtaining a GCSE grade A\* to C in the year 2001 was well below the national average whereas the percentage obtaining grade A\* to G was slightly above the national average. Boys performed slightly better than girls. In 2002 results were slightly down on those achieved in 2001, one of only two subjects in the school where this was the case. This was mainly due to no pupils being entered for the higher tier paper because of staffing difficulties. The department has now addressed the issue of preparing pupils for the highest levels of attainment with the current Year 11 benefiting from this change in policy.
76. In work seen during the inspection pupils' attainment by the age of 16 is below national expectations, the improvement on previous standards being due to work now being better matched to pupils' level of prior attainment. Higher attaining pupils now demonstrate a good understanding of trigonometry and are very comfortable in handling statistical data and interpreting results. They are less confident with the solving of algebraic equations. Lower attaining pupils have difficulty retaining knowledge but are able to calculate, with reasonable accuracy, the areas of compound shapes. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to the demands of following the GCSE course at foundation level. Year 11 pupils, for example, show good

understanding of angle theory and can apply this theory when determining angles contained in simple geometrical shapes.

77. The levels of attainment recorded on entry to Year 7 are well below the national average, and given this, pupils' achievement throughout Years 7 to 9 is good. The greater attention to numeracy within the department is beginning to have a positive effect, with basic numeracy skills developed through regular short, focused sessions on mental arithmetic at the start of each lesson. Pupils are set work that is suited to their needs and they are increasingly able to use and apply their numeracy skills in other parts of the mathematics curriculum. Pupils' achievement in mathematics by the age of 16 is satisfactory. The recent staffing difficulties have had some negative impact on pupils' progress, but now these are resolved there are signs of improving achievement.
78. Teaching within the department is good. All lessons observed were judged to be at least satisfactory, the majority were good and a significant proportion judged to be very good or excellent. Lessons are well prepared, teachers have high expectations of the pupils and demonstrate good classroom management skills, as a result of which pupils behave well and acquire new skills and knowledge. Lesson objectives are made clear at the start of each lesson and key words are identified. Good classroom displays also contribute to effective learning. Teachers recognise the differing needs of individual pupils. They are aware of individual education plans that are provided for pupils with special educational needs. Good practice exists in the use of support staff who demonstrate excellent understanding of each pupil's specific need, have good subject knowledge and work in tandem with the teaching staff to keep pupils on task. The majority of pupils at all levels are motivated by the enthusiasm of their teachers and willingly contribute to class discussion and questioning. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and are built upon trust, respect and good humour.
79. Most pupils take pride in the appearance of their work. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent, however, and some poorly presented work escapes notice. Pupils receive praise for good work, but there is a lack of constructive written advice that pupils could reflect upon in order to improve future performance. Not all teachers keep detailed records of homework marks and therefore miss an opportunity to monitor pupil progress.
80. The mathematics department makes a valuable contribution to pupil development in spiritual, moral, social and cultural areas. For instance, patterns in Islamic Art are used to illustrate symmetry. The accommodation for the teaching of mathematics is good and the department is well resourced with regard to books, materials and equipment.
81. Leadership of the department is good. The head of department has been in post for five terms and leads a team of enthusiastic, well-qualified and talented teachers. Expectations have been raised for both staff and pupils with a shared commitment to the raising of standards. The departmental handbook is detailed and helpful, it contains policies and effective guidance for good teaching. With the more stable staffing, these are now beginning to be effectively implemented across the department. Monitoring of teacher performance has not been fully implemented however. Detailed analysis of pupil performance has been established, although the use of this data to improve standards is still developing. Further areas for development are ongoing assessment and feedback to pupils and more use of ICT. Although the statutory requirements for ICT within the mathematics curriculum are being met there is insufficient use of ICT in the classroom.

82. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection report and the department has a clear commitment to the raising of standards.

## NUMERACY

83. Standards in numeracy are below average overall. The mathematics department has responded with enthusiasm to the introduction of the national numeracy strategy, which they believe will help to raise standards. The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 has been rewritten to take account of the new guidelines. Mathematics lessons for pupils in these year groups now commence with short mental arithmetic sessions and finish with reviews of progress towards stated objectives. As a result pupils are acquiring a better facility with number, and are improving their basic computational skills and ability to carry out calculations mentally, although standards are still below average.
84. Evidence from lesson observations during the inspection shows that pupils are able to apply their numeracy skills in other subjects besides mathematics, although many require guidance and support from teachers to be able to do so. For example, in science pupils are able to take measurements and perform calculations and in art pupils estimate and compare lengths and use geometric properties in the construction of patterns. In history pupils refer to time lines and in geography pupils use and understand grid references and are also able to interpret graphs and statistical diagrams.
85. There is no whole school policy for developing pupils' numeracy and for guiding and ensuring consistency of approach across the curriculum. One is planned, however, and arrangements are in place for staff training prior to its development.

## SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are of good quality.
- Leadership shows clear educational direction.
- Management of science is very good.
- There are effective assessment procedures for analysing test results allowing progress of pupils to be closely monitored.

### Areas for improvement

- The standard of higher attaining pupils needs to be raised.
- The new departmental structure needs to be fully implemented.
- Pupils' practical skills need to be improved.

86. At the end of Year 9 in 2001, standards in the National Curriculum tests were well below the national average and well below the average for similar schools. The performance in science was the same as in mathematics and English. Results for boys were better than for girls. The trend of improvement in overall results for the last few years is above the national trend. Results for 2002 show a further significant improvement with the exception of the attainment of higher attaining pupils. The current standard of work at the end of Year 9 is as expected from the most recent national test results. Although it is still below the national average it confirms the rising trend. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 9 can identify the properties of and suggest



possible uses for a range of materials. A small minority need prompting before they apply scientific terminology such as ductile and malleable. Lower attaining pupils, some with special educational needs, are able to group materials into metals and non-metals by testing with a cell and bulb and by considering other properties such as appearance. Pupils in Year 7 use microscopes responsibly and can relate the shape of a cell to its function. However, few are able to draw a time line to describe the development of cell theory. There is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

87. The results of the 2001 GCSE examinations at A\*-C grades in science were well below the results nationally, although at A\*-G grades they were in line. The results in 2002 show an improvement. Standards seen during the inspection match the standards achieved in the examination results in 2002. The improved standards are the result of good teaching and the impact of more effective assessment strategies. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 understand the factors associated with global warming and use ICT techniques to investigate the carbon cycle. Their practical skills are not as well developed as their knowledge and understanding. For example, they are unable to find the rate at which bread dough rises but they understand the importance of enzymes in the fermentation process. Pupils in another Year 10 group understand the basic principles of heat transfer but they have difficulty in applying them to design an efficient solar panel. Other pupils show sound mathematical skills when they draw graphs to compare the rate of photosynthesis with light intensity and concentration of carbon dioxide. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. For example, in Year 10 they analyse investigation plans of the extension of a spring before planning and attempting their own investigation into the effectiveness of the concentration of acid on its reaction with marble. Most of the group understand the need for a fair test but fail to identify all the variables involved.
88. Pupils enter the school with standards well below the national average. The developments taking place within the department are having a positive impact on pupils' progress and the achievements of pupils of all ages in relation to their prior attainment are now good. However, the shortage of laboratory accommodation limits the effectiveness of practical work in developing the practical skills of many pupils and reduces the opportunity for direct experimentation. Pupils with special educational needs are taught in small groups with pupils of similar prior attainment and make similar progress to their peers.
89. The quality of teaching is good. One lesson was excellent, four out of eleven lessons were very good, three good and three satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. This is very much better than at the time of the last inspection. Learning objectives are shared with the pupils and achievement in the lesson evaluated against these objectives. Good lesson structures are in place forming a sound framework for learning. Good classroom management is usually allied to challenge at the appropriate level enabling pupils to learn effectively. For example, a microscope with a camera attached shows the specimen to the whole class allowing for relevant class discussion about the reasons for the shape of a cell. Pupils then choose slides to look at and to consolidate the link between shape and function. The effective plenary session drew upon this understanding with carefully directed questions. A variety of resources are used including an interactive white board and computer assisted demonstrations. Lessons in classrooms cause dislocation to the preferred sequence of lessons and limit the possibilities of involving pupils in experiments. Occasionally, initial discussions are lengthy with too little pupil involvement. This produces a lack of interest with its negative effect on learning. However, pupils usually listen attentively and cooperate fully with the teacher and each other undertaking practical activities responsibly.

90. Leadership and management are very good. There is clear educational vision that has given the department direction and contributed to the improvement in standards. The recent changes in the management structure have yet to be fully developed. The schools planned programme of work has been comprehensively revised and provides a sound basis for lesson plans. The setting arrangement allows for effective differentiation. There is a good range of learning opportunities allowing for a broad view of science to include, for example, moral issues such as the impact of the recent world conference on the environment and scientific applications. The Internet is used as a source of information for both teachers and pupils and new technology such as power point display assists in lesson presentation. Formal teaching of ICT occurs in Year 8 and pupils use and extend their ICT skills in data logging, data analysis and word processing. Monitoring of the effectiveness of teaching is in place but this needs further development. The staff works well as a team and there is a very good atmosphere in the department with a shared commitment to continue the marked improvement in recent years.
91. Resources are good and used well. Technical assistance is now satisfactory with efficient procedures for providing teachers and pupils with the necessary equipment. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The four laboratories are large and in good condition but many lessons have to be taught in classrooms and this has a significant effect on learning. Two new laboratories are planned for 2003.
92. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards each year have risen. Teaching, pupil's attitudes and behaviour, curriculum planning, use of ICT, staff absence and resources have all shown significant improvement.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Good relationships between pupils and teachers.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge.

### Areas for improvement

- Raise standards.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Improve the use of sketchbooks for personal research.
- Improve planning and assessment procedures to focus on raising achievement.

93. Standards in art are well below average. The teacher assessments for pupils in Year 9 in 2001 were well below average. The 2002 assessments showed lower standards than 2001. The 2001 GCSE results at A\*-C grades were well below the national average, although all pupils gained a pass between A\* and G, above the national average. The 2002 GCSE results were less good, although again, every pupil gained a pass between A\* to G. Art was one of only two subjects in the school where results declined. Small numbers of pupils follow the GCSE course, although these are increasing.
94. The current standard of work at the end of Year 9 is well below expectations. Pupils' drawing from observation is weak and under-developed. They do not use sketchbooks for research into methods and materials or to gather information from the world around

them. Pupils lack the knowledge and confidence to work with appropriate levels of independence. They are not comfortable using subject specific words when discussing their work and are very reliant upon their teachers for direction and guidance. The influence of work such as Monet's seascapes or Picasso's collages is evident in paintings and collages. Work is displayed in exciting ways in the public areas of the school and includes a thought provoking representation in clay and mixed media of September 11 in New York City. Even allowing for their varied and often limited previous experiences of art in their primary schools, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory by the end of Year 9. Their work does not show sufficient progression in the development of expected skills, knowledge or understanding.

95. Standards throughout Year 10 and 11 are more mixed. Although still well below average overall, there is some evidence of improvement in Year 10. In general, by the end of Year 11, pupils' basic skills remain under-developed. Sketchbooks are not used for investigation or experimentation. Most work is self-contained painting and drawing with insufficient development of ideas into space, form, light and shade. Pupils' grasp of perspective is flawed; drawings of bottles have flat, rather than curved bottoms, for example. Better standards were seen in the pastel drawings by some Year 11 pupils based on articles associated with the sea. Pupils continue to depend heavily on their teacher for direction. An indication of improving standards was seen in the drawings produced by Year 10 pupils, which were above average. Pupils analysed the shapes and tones of bundles of white cotton fabric, and their willingness to experiment with different media gave them the confidence to respond well to a challenging task. The boys were more inventive than the girls. Despite the undeveloped basic skills of some pupils and the inconsistent standards, the improvements evident, especially in Year 10, indicate that pupils are now beginning to achieve satisfactorily. Those who are most capable benefit from opportunities provided by the summer Sculpture Club and projects such as the Jubilee Tower in Telford Town Centre, where they worked with artists-in-residence.
96. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. This is because, although some of the teaching was good and very good, it was unsatisfactory in three out of eight lessons observed, and this an unacceptably high proportion. In these lessons, the work was inappropriately pitched. Teachers have good subject knowledge, but they do not always use it to give sufficient and precise enough information to pupils on how to develop their basic skills, thus limiting their progress. Their sometimes inconsistent expectations leave gaps in pupils' knowledge, such as when unchallenged shading with straight lines flattens curved forms or there is little appreciation that by varying line quality they can show space or texture. In the better lessons pupils are enabled to learn more effectively, such as in a challenging Year 7 lesson devoted to drawing ellipses. The teacher gave a good demonstration of estimating proportion and analysing the shape at the base of a bottle, which resulted in pupils being clear about what was expected. Literacy skills were also promoted well. Teachers can be inventive in the way they design tasks and lesson activities: one devised an effective method of demonstrating perspective to pupils; another made good use of reproductions of paintings by Botticelli and other artists to illustrate the effect of light falling on drapery. Relationships in most classes are good with pupils working well together, although in one lesson, pupils' behaviour was not effectively managed. Many pupils lack confidence in their abilities, regularly making comments such as "I'm no good at art!", with girls' attitudes generally being better than boys in Years 7 to 9. When pupils analyse their own work, it tends to be descriptive rather than evaluative. This is mirrored in the marking, which, although very positive, does not always reflect the true value of the work or offer constructive guidance. Homework often appears rushed.

97. The curriculum is satisfactory and improving, and covers drawing and painting, sculpture and printmaking and the use of ICT. There are plans to introduce more printmaking methods, but the lack of focus on basic skills and research and experimentation is a weakness. Pupils have opportunities to broaden their experience by visiting museums and galleries in Ironbridge, Walsall and Liverpool. Assessment is satisfactory although assessment data is not well enough used to remedy weaknesses in the curriculum or in forward planning to improve learning. The head of department was appointed to a weak department within the last two years and she has introduced changes that are improving the subject. While aspects of her leadership are strong and her commitment is unquestioned, features of management need further attention: strategic planning requires more measures to raise attainment and teaching lacks the rigorous monitoring to ensure consistency of learning.
98. Since the last inspection the department has made unsatisfactory progress. Positive developments include learning objectives being clearer, more opportunities for pupils to use computers to produce artwork, pupils' knowledge of art and artists improving, and better opportunities for higher attaining pupils to develop their talents. However, standards remain well below average, teaching and learning were satisfactory but some teaching is now unsatisfactory, and pupils' research methods remain under-developed.

## CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **good**.

### Strengths

- Good subject audit developed.
- Enthusiastic senior management leadership.
- Thorough revision of Year 7 to 9 curriculum.
- Good additional contribution through subjects.

### Areas for improvement

- Increase the opportunities to write about citizenship.
- Provision of staff development for teaching the subject.
- Develop and extend the curriculum opportunities in Year 10 and 11.

99. Standards are below expectations at the end of Year 9. Pupils have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of becoming informed citizens through the study of the government, rights, the price of crime and finance modules. These are taught through the PSHE lessons by the form tutors. Lessons are taught in the mixed attainment tutor groups and there are a wide range of opportunities for all pupils to contribute appropriately in active group work using participation cards, brainstorm exercises and analysis of graphs and charts. Opportunities are provided for paired work and interview experience. There is at present a lack of opportunities for the pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding through a range of writing experiences. There are some worksheets, but the provision of resources more generally is an area to be developed.
100. The standards pupils reach in Year 10 and 11 are also below expectations. At the current time the citizenship opportunities are more limited in these years as each pupil has a five-week module in the year rather than a module each term. A specialist teacher on a rotational basis delivers the curriculum within the PSHE time. Current topics include equal opportunities issues. Pupils are challenged to think and feel

especially about everyday injustice. However, the lack of time prevents pupils exploring issues in sufficient depth.

101. In addition to the provision in lessons described above, pupils are given a range of opportunities to develop their understanding of citizenship outside of the classroom. Pupils of all ages participate actively in the Schools Council, taking part in annual elections and gaining direct experience of participation and responsible action. The tutorial periods are used for pupil issues to be discussed prior to consideration at the Council and in this way a wide number of pupils are encouraged and supported to participate in active citizenship. A range of external speakers have been welcomed into the school, such as the local Member of Parliament, to widen pupils' understanding of their own community. Other opportunities such as the Pensioners' Party and the extensive prefect system provide further ways of developing responsible citizenship. Overall, therefore, the achievement of pupils of all ages is good.
102. Overall the quality of teaching and learning are good, with some very good features, across the school. Teachers have high expectations and work from clear citizenship principles that are shared with pupils. For example in a Year 11 class the teacher challenged the pupils about xenophobia and football racism and as a consequence they had an improved idea of these difficult concepts. In a Year 10 class pupils enthusiastically discussed a video about caring for fellow citizens. Pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, are encouraged to develop informed opinions and challenge the opinions of others. Good relationships between pupils and teachers help controversial issues to be dealt with sensitively, and these lessons contribute significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers work hard to ensure that a balanced view is given and they give many opportunities for pupils to reflect and respond. Pupils, in one lesson, commented that the subject has opened their eyes to new ideas, introducing to them the concept of duties as well as rights.
103. In addition to the timetabled lessons for citizenship, a school audit of all other subjects has revealed that several other subjects contribute to pupils' understanding of citizenship. These include history where there are many opportunities to study the nature of different regimes and the interaction of the individual with the state, sociology looking at the family and socialisation issues, physical education where relationships are particularly stressed, science with opportunities to debate the impact of changes on the population and geography considering the role of individuals, air pollution and urbanisation issues.
104. Senior managers have led the introduction of citizenship well. Comprehensive planning has led to the development of imaginative citizenship modules. The school audit has ensured that the other contributions are highlighted and that they play an important part in the introduction of the subject within the school. There has been no specific training for the form tutors, although there is good support from experienced heads of year. Citizenship is seen to contribute to the raising of pupils' self-esteem and there are plans to introduce an active learning experience within the Year 11 work, this will strengthen the skills of enquiry and communication framework. Citizenship is still a developing initiative, but the school has made significant in-roads in the introduction and development of the subject.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- The improvement in GCSE results.
- Teachers subject knowledge in electronics, food, resistant materials and textiles.
- Pupils project folders in textiles.

### Areas for improvement

- Planning does not focus concisely enough upon national curriculum programmes of study and levels of attainment.
- Lesson objectives often have an unclear focus upon design and technology.
- Accommodation is cramped in textiles technology, a significant amount of equipment throughout the department needs updating, and some machinery safety guards need attention.

105. Standards at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well below the national average for all pupils. In 2002 there was a significant improvement. However, these assessments were unduly generous. Standards were more in line with those seen during the inspection, which were below average. Pupils' knowledge of simple electronics in Year 9 is poor and they are unable to copy sample drawings of basic current diagrams accurately. Pupils in Year 8 textiles technology had difficulty in observation drawing of simple hats. However, pupils are able to reflect upon their designs and how they might be improved.
106. When pupils arrive in the school their knowledge, understanding and skills in the subject are well below expectations. They have had a limited range of experiences and their practical skills and presentation of design ideas are under-developed. Pupils' achievement across years 7, 8 and 9 is good. Pupils produce practical work of better quality than their design work. Year 7 pupils designing a security device in graphics used key words to develop early ideas but found difficulty in drawing very simple layout lines with rulers to write their design brief. In contrast, other Year 7 pupils in textiles were already beginning to succeed in their use of machine sewing appliqué shapes to cushion covers. Year 9 pupils in food technology showed improved practical skills by producing basic meals based upon the theme 'anything but the sandwich'. Literacy skills, for most, are well below that expected on entry to the school, which impacts on the quality of folder work produced. However, the department is making a positive contribution, supporting literacy development through the use of keywords in lessons. Boys and girls with special educational needs achieve well.
107. Overall, performance at GCSE in 2001 was well below the national average, although most pupils gained a grade at A\*-G. The 2002 results have improved, especially in resistant materials. In food technology there has been a steady improvement, with these pupils performing as well in design and technology as in their other subjects. The standard of work during the inspection was below average. Year 11 pupils in food technology working on snack meals could discuss and develop ideas about menus but were not readily able to recall where they might research information and others needed very structured guidance, to help them with their projects. In resistant materials Year 11 pupils were able to develop their ideas of how to model and make

small moving vehicles though had limited skills and experiences of using construction kits.

108. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory in Year 10 and 11. They make most progress in their making skills, less in researching and evaluating products and are weakest in their use of computer systems, and control. In a Year 11 food technology lesson designing a food product for examination coursework, pupils showed satisfactory levels of 'basic' practical skills. However, those analysing food products spoke in very general terms and had little understanding of industrial ways of processing food. Year 11 pupils building models in resistant material were quite knowledgeable about how they could be made using wood, metal and plastic, but lacked understanding of how gears and elastic bands could be used to provide movement. Another Year 11 group making educational toys in resistant materials showed below average standards in usual basic marking out and sawing tools.
109. The quality of teaching is good overall. It was good or better in over half of lessons seen although was only satisfactory in four out of ten. Good lessons have clear aims related to practical tasks, which are shared with pupils. They are planned with a clear structure involving a set sequence of activities, and appropriate resources are readily available for pupils' use. A Year 7 class in textiles had the aims of the lesson carefully explained to them and were reminded of the stage they were at with their appliqué design; a clear sequence of activities ensured they designed their shapes, sewing them in position by hand before careful machine sewing. This structure ensured a brisk lesson with pupils always busy producing good standards of work. In contrast, a Year 9 lesson in resistant material had unclear and general aims, which were not sufficiently focused upon the practical elements, and this led to pupils becoming unclear as what to do resulting in poorer standards of work. Pupils' learning was enhanced when they clearly understood the whole process of design and technology. Pupils in the Year 7 class designing and making appliqué cushion covers developed good understanding through having detailed project folders, which had national curriculum levels, details of their assessment, notes about cushion specifications, activity worksheets about small equipment being used and an analysis of similar cushion products along with their own colourful designs and ideas for their product. A good classroom display showed how they could be packaged for the customer. In a Year 10 food technology lesson very good skills were used by the teacher in managing the behaviour of a small group of boys, ably assisted by a learning support assistant. A clear structure to this lesson, based upon diet and health, ensured the group kept on task, although the planning was not as closely related to areas of study and levels of attainment as it could be. Pupils are keen on their lessons in design and technology, coming into workshops during break times and after school to continue with their projects. Pupils are very good in providing ingredients from home for their food technology lessons. Behaviour is generally good throughout the department.
110. Not all pupils take design and technology in Years 10 and 11, which is in breach of existing statutory requirements, although these regulations are changing. Curriculum planning is not always detailed enough. It does not sufficiently focus upon programmes of study within the national curriculum and examination specifications or make close enough reference to levels of attainment. Cramped accommodation and old equipment throughout the department, which is in need of updating, constrains standards of work. The lack of computer aided manufacturing equipment makes it difficult for the department to adequately fulfil some areas of study.
111. The leadership of the subject is good overall. Over recent years the subject leader has had to deal with staffing issues that have impeded the department's development, and

aspects of lesson planning, teaching and the curriculum have weaknesses. However, the quality of teaching has improved, leading to pupils making greater progress and achieving higher standards of work. Overall good progress has been made in addressing areas for improvement from the last inspection.

## DRAMA

Overall, the quality of provision in drama is **good**.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The GCSE results improved from 2001 to 2002.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' extra-curricular experiences.

### Areas for improvement

- The link with English in years 7 to 9 recognised in the scheme of work should be used to contribute formally to English speaking and listening assessments.

112. The standards of work of pupils up to Year 9 seen in the inspection are generally below national expectations. Pupils enter the school with well below average standards of literacy, which limit their capacity to respond, plan and improvise. They do, however, show an understanding of the cooperation required in pair and group work and collaborate without friction. Pupils in Year 7 participate with energy in the warm-up activities, and are able to represent different feelings in posture and movement. Some cannot, however, maintain an appropriate demeanour, and in oral improvisation many are reticent and unable to sustain talk. Pupils in Year 8 are engaged by the task of planning and role playing characters in different status situations, and respond with enthusiasm. Though they develop understanding of power relationships, however, their responses are relatively simplistic. In Year 9, pupils work with enthusiasm planning group responses to a poem. Many, however, are unable to benefit from previous learning and need teacher help to use it to inform their responses.
113. In the GCSE examination in 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C in drama was well below the national average, as had been the case in previous years. Though still below the national average, the proportion increased significantly in 2002 however, as did the proportion in the newly-established course in expressive arts. The standards of work of pupils in Years 10 and 11 seen during the inspection were generally below national expectations. Pupils in Year 10 work well in groups devising presentations incorporating the technique of "marking the moment", and perform generally without inhibition. Many remain themselves rather than creating a character, however, and their speaking skills are limited. In Year 11, pupils unselfconsciously develop their performance skills using mask and mime. Their improvisations lack telling detail and generally do not conclude strongly and clearly.
114. Pupils of all levels of attainment can participate equally in drama and they make good progress as a consequence of well-planned teaching informed by good subject knowledge and confident, good-humoured pupil management. All the teaching observed was satisfactory or better and four fifths was good – lessons are delivered with energy and communicate enthusiasm. Lessons are based upon a detailed scheme of work which pays good attention to the development of drama skills, and there is good practice in the assessment of pupils' work. The opportunity to visit theatre productions, participate in a drama club and school productions and see theatre groups and specialists visiting the school enrich pupils' experiences. Regular group work and



the exploration of contemporary issues give pupils good opportunities for social and cultural development.

115. The head of department leads and manages the subject well, enjoying the benefit of good facilities. The development of a GCSE expressive arts course is a good strategy to accommodate pupils' generally low literacy skills, and the increasing numbers opting for it indicate its appropriateness. Improvement since the last inspection is good, with GCSE results improving and the subject now specialist-taught.

## GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- Standards are improving.
- Teaching of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT is good.
- Pupils have very good relationships with each other and with their teachers.

### Areas for improvement

- Attainment overall, but especially for boys.
- The number of pupils who opt for GCSE in the subject.
- Consistency in the use of assessment information to check pupils' progress, give specific feedback to pupils and set targets for improvement.

116. In the 2001 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, the number of pupils attaining level 5 and above was well below the national average. Results in 2002 showed a significant improvement. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well below the national average both at A\*-C and A\*-G. Results in 2002 show a very encouraging rise. Only small numbers of pupils opt to study geography for GCSE and these have been declining. There is, however, a rise in the number of pupils studying geography in the present Year 10. Boys achieve lower results than girls both in the tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE results.

117. In general, pupils' attainment in geography is well below average when they come to the school. In work seen during the inspection standards are below, rather than well below average at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. Pupils achieve well overall, but boys' achievement is still lower than that for girls. There are no wide differences in achievement between the different ethnic groups found in the school or across different levels of attainment. Pupils with special educational needs achieve good standards in relation to their prior attainment and their overall achievement is good in Years 7 to 11. There have been significant improvements in teaching methods with the result that standards are now rising.

118. By the end of Year 9, pupils have acquired a sound geographical vocabulary. Pupils in Year 8, for example, study the formation and distribution of tropical rainforests and understand related technical terms. A strong criticism of the previous inspection was that pupils had few opportunities to explain geographical patterns and processes and had limited opportunities for independent study. There has been a strong emphasis on these aspects of pupils' work and this has been a strong contributory factor in the rise in standards that has taken place. This is seen in the work of higher attaining pupils in

Year 9 who can explain the conditions necessary for the formation of extreme weather features such as tornadoes and hurricanes, with some able to show their distribution in the world. Lower attaining pupils, however, were confused about the difference between floods and tidal waves. Pupils are now developing the skills of analysis, interpretation and exploration.

119. By the end of Year 11, the small numbers of pupils who study for GCSE have extended these skills in preparation for their examinations. Higher attaining pupils produce some good individual work on the advantages and disadvantages of living in urban or rural areas. Nevertheless, the lack of a strong, previous base of research and interpretation is still evident in Year 11, but changes in the curriculum and in teaching mean that pupils are improving their independent learning skills. There is no programme at present for field courses and this restricts opportunities to some extent. This is recognised by the school and the department development plan outlines schemes for development. Pupils have good drawing and mapping skills and produce a good range of maps and diagrams to support their GCSE work.
120. Geography makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy development. Pupils' work is regularly marked and corrected and displays of key vocabulary are found in most lessons. This emphasis on basic vocabulary development and on grammar and spelling has a positive impact on literacy standards. Pupils routinely draw and use graphs and tables to present information and to interpret data and the subject makes a good contribution to numeracy in the school. Pupils' use of ICT to edit and refine their work, for research and to create graphs and diagrams is good.
121. The quality of teaching is good. At the time of the previous inspection, nearly one-third of teaching was unsatisfactory. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work were also unsatisfactory. Two out of three lessons seen on this inspection were good, and an excellent lesson was observed. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Pupils now behave well in lessons and show good attitudes to work. Relationships between pupils and with their teachers are very good. It is this combination of strong improvements in teaching and in pupils' behaviour and attitudes that is the main contributory factor in the rise in standards that is now very evident. A strong feature of all the teaching is very good pupil control. This is achieved with quiet authority and with good humour so that pupils are not demeaned. On the contrary, teachers try constantly to build pupils' self-confidence. Teachers plan lessons carefully so that pupils are not just given a range of geographical facts, but are also expected to think for themselves, interpret evidence and work out solutions. This is clearly seen in work done by Year 11 pupils on urban renewal and regeneration. Relevant homework is regularly set. Although pupils' work is regularly marked, the use of national curriculum levels for showing pupils what level they are at or for setting targets for improvement are inconsistent. Boys' attainment still lags behind that of girls and teachers need to develop strategies to overcome this.
122. At the time of the previous inspection, the scheme of work for the subject was inadequate. This has now been corrected and a progressive and consistent scheme of work is in place. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In many lessons pupils are able to reflect on their environment and appreciate the wonders of nature and of the world. This is clear, for example, in work done on earthquakes and volcanoes. Good work was seen where pupils wrote imaginary letters to friends imagining that they were victims of a volcanic eruption. A moral dimension is found in lessons and pupils are taught right from wrong. Pupils are also taught to listen to, and respect the views of others. There are good opportunities for social development through working together in pairs and groups and taking part in discussions about environmental issues. The in-built cultural element

about people from other countries provides good cultural development. These are likely to be further improved when a programme of field courses is developed. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall, but the use of data to check the progress of groups of pupils is less consistent.

123. Taking into account the substantial improvements in teaching, the work done to improve the scheme of work and the rise in standards, the leadership and management of the subject are good and good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**.

### Strengths

- Good teacher knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils.
- Strong classroom management.
- Leadership of the department is good.
- Overall standards are improving.

### Areas for improvement

- Improve girls' standards at GCSE.
- Teaching to be monitored more systematically.
- Encourage pupils' independent learning.
- Clarify lesson objectives and strengthen end of lesson plenary sessions.

124. In 2001, standards as indicated by teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were well below average, and the teacher assessment judgements in 2002 were similar. The standard of work seen during the inspection indicates standards to be below average, the improvement being brought about by developments within the department such as to the curriculum, resources and teaching. Given the pupils' attainment on entry, this represents good achievement. Furthermore standards have been improving over the last three years. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results in 2001 were below average, although all pupils except one gained a grade at A\*-G. However, the upward trend since the last inspection is strong and the 2002 results show a further six per cent improvement. Boys have outperformed girls for the last two years and the gap is becoming significant. The standards currently attained by pupils in Year 11 are a little below average, broadly in line with those indicated by the 2002 results. This improvement has been achieved through the introduction of a new GCSE specification and by the increased use of literacy strategies to develop pupils' writing skills. Overall achievement of pupils at the end of Year 11 is good. There is no significant difference in progress for those with special educational needs or those with English as an additional language.

125. By the end of Year 9 pupils develop a broad range of historical skills, including the interpretation of historical evidence and data, the analysis of complex historical issues and the understanding of chronology. Pupils can use a wide range of learning materials including thematic worksheets, pictorial evidence, timelines, writing frames and primary and secondary source material. Year 9 pupils are able to effectively interpret the local history of Coalbrookdale and to analyse the significance of Abraham Darby to the

subsequent industrial development. Pupils can use sources to underpin their historical arguments. There is still a strong emphasis on literacy and reading, listening and writing skills in Year 9 and this strategy has contributed to the development of historical understanding in recent years. As yet, however, there is not enough emphasis on providing a wider range of writing opportunities for pupils. Pupils are able, with the use of structured writing frames, to write a short letter from Henry VIII to Wolsley, but they are not confident in producing an extended piece of historical writing comparing and contrasting the relative importance of Darby and Wedgwood to the industrial changes of the eighteenth century. Pupils are also not confident about identifying the relative strengths and weaknesses or the advantages of disadvantages of a particular historical situation, such as the reasons why Hannibal attacked Rome.

126. By the end of Year 11, pupils have developed a good understanding of the contribution of war, in particular the Vietnam War, to the development of political change. Pupils are able to interpret a variety of primary sources to present thoughtful arguments. In particular they are able to interpret film material to make their own notes. Most pupils respond positively to the challenge of developing their ideas into essays, although a considerable degree of support is necessary with structured worksheets to produce an analysis of the importance of the League of Nations. Some pupils are not able to comprehend how much has to be achieved in a limited time and as a result work too slowly. There is also over reliance upon the teacher to lead the activities and as a result pupils lack some initiative to develop their own historical interpretations, such as the debate about the significance of the Manchurian Crisis in 1931 to world peace and stability.
127. The quality of teaching is good overall. Two-thirds of lessons seen were good or better. Teachers have good knowledge and are enthusiastic historians. Teachers clearly respect and like the pupils and this encourages a positive learning environment and well managed classrooms. Most pupils are able to work with good concentration and the pace of learning is often challenging. Ideas are thoroughly explained and developed, and a broad range of teaching techniques is used in the majority of lessons, including effective question and answer sessions and role-play exercises. Many lessons, however, are predominantly teacher led, offering limited opportunities for pupils to work independently, although there are some examples of good research using ICT, particularly the Native American Year 7 project. In the best lessons, learning aims are shared with pupils and reviewed at the end of the lesson, so that the teacher can judge how much progress has taken place. Attention needs to be given to developing this good practice throughout the whole department. Homework is set regularly and marking supports progress, learning and achievement. Pupils have suitable individual learning targets that inform their work and progress. There is regular half termly assessment across the department that contributes to the steady improvement of standards.
128. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has revised and strengthened the schemes of work, has developed a comprehensive bank of varied work sheets, introduced a new GCSE specification which has led to much improved results and developed the use of ICT within the curriculum. Some monitoring of teaching occurs but this is not yet done on a regular and systematic basis to ensure that the very good teaching features that are evident are developed throughout the department. History is a popular subject within the school with a higher than national take up in Year 10 and numbers which are continuing to improve, and with rapidly rising standards.

129. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in standards, teaching, classroom management and behaviour, teacher expectations of pupils and departmental leadership. The department is making a significant contribution to the work of the school.

## ICT

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

### Strengths

- Standards at Key Stage 4 are significantly above the national average.
- Significant improvements in ICT have taken place since the last inspection.
- The school meets statutory requirements for ICT, and the use of ICT in other subjects.
- Large numbers of pupils make use of the ICT facilities before and after school.

### Areas for improvement

- The national ICT training scheme for teachers has not yet started in all subject areas, and is yet to make an impact in further extending the use of ICT within subject teaching.
- Work in Year 7 needs to be kept under review to take advantage of the increased ICT skills which pupils bring from primary school.

130. In 2001 the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 as indicated by teacher assessments were broadly in line with the national average. There is an upward trend of improvement in attainment in recent years, continued into 2002, with more pupils attaining at the higher levels. A significant investment in resources has made a major contribution to these rising standards. Inspection evidence indicates current standards also to be in line with national expectations. Work in Years 7 to 9 covers the expected range of experiences for pupils, including data-logging, which was not present at the last inspection. In Year 9, work is more integrated, requiring the ability to search for information, validate it and merge sources to make presentations. Pupils develop criteria for presentation for an audience and the outcomes are evaluated. The correct use of terminology is emphasised throughout the course. This emphasis to ICT work is characteristic of attainment at the higher ICT levels. Some early ICT work in Year 7 does not build sufficiently on pupils' existing ICT skills.
131. Achievement by pupils by the end of Year 9 is good. All pupils can search the Internet for background information and integrate it into a presentation about their home town. They can use email to send files to other members of the class and can evaluate the likely impact of the presentation upon a target audience. The ICT achievements of pupils with individual education plans were often equivalent to those of other pupils.
132. There was no GCSE or equivalent examination result in 2001. In 2002 the proportion of pupils gaining a pass or merit award in GNVQ (Intermediate) ICT was high; although there are not yet any national figures for 2002, the results were significantly above the 2001 national figures. During Years 10 and 11, pupils undertake a 10 week ICT module, supplemented by work in ICT across subjects of the curriculum. By the end of Year 11, the experiences of these pupils provides a good entitlement in using ICT, although the course offers no accreditation at the present time. The school meets statutory requirements for ICT as a subject in its own right, as well for the use of ICT in subjects. An applied double-option GCSE course is available at Key Stage 4.
133. By the end of Year 11, those pupils who undertake the core ICT skills programme can research local house prices, use a spreadsheet to examine the range and variation in

price, capture an image of a local map and produce a document mapping price variation to area. Achievement in the development and application of ICT capability is good. Pupils undertaking the specialist applied GCSE course can build a relational database with three tables showing confidence in the use of this more advanced application and showing that they understand the key features of a successful design. The standards they attain are above average and their achievement is very good.

134. Teaching is good at in Years 7 to 9 overall, with examples of very good, good and satisfactory teaching. The tasks for each lesson and the resources that pupils need are made available from the schools' network. This leads to an efficient use of time and helps to clarify the lesson objectives to pupils. The best lessons have a good structure and use methods which require pupils to work towards higher ICT levels. The teacher's subject knowledge and class management skills in such lessons are very good. In lessons that were less than good, the ICT skills that pupils already had were insufficiently developed by the tasks set during the lesson. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is never less than good and ranges from good to excellent. In the best lessons, coursework requirements had been translated into focussed learning tasks with a strong emphasis placed on pupils reviewing their own progress, and deducing criteria for evaluating the outcome to their work. Appropriate theoretical work, integrated with practical tasks and frequent testing, was encouraging good progress towards high standards in this subject.
135. Investments in resources in recent years have contributed significantly to the raising of standards in this subject since the last inspection. The national ICT training for teachers has not yet benefited teachers in all subject areas but plans are in place to redress this.
136. The school's ratio of computers-to-pupils is now at the national average. There are three well-equipped ICT areas, two rooms being spacious and one that is smaller than ideal. Large numbers of pupils make use of the ICT facilities before and after school for a range of activities supporting study across the wider curriculum. A broadband Internet connection is effective in providing fast access to additional learning materials. An additional ICT area has been provided through the 'Playing for Success' initiative, which is used for school and community learning. There are some additional computers housed across the school including the library and Education Support Unit. The school has links with partner primary schools to look at the continuity of learning of ICT from Year 6 to Year 7. However, work in Year 7 needs to be kept under review to take full advantage of the increased ICT skills which pupils bring from primary school.
137. The management and strategic direction given to this subject is good overall. The recent very good examination results in GNVQ ICT are a consequence of the school's determination to raise standards in this subject. Further planned developments of ICT are to accredit the ICT skills of all pupils in Years 10 and 11 and to further develop the expertise of subject teachers in using ICT to raise standards in their subject.
138. Since the last inspection ICT has improved in all areas identified as requiring improvement and this represents very good progress by the school. The data-logging and control strand of ICT is now taught to all pupils in Years 7 to 9, and an entitlement to study ICT capability is now provided to all pupils. The achievements of pupils of all ages are now at least good. The progress of pupils with individual education plans, previously identified as a weakness is now a strength. The computer-to-pupil ratio, previously insufficient, is now at the national average.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- The improvement in attainment at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching in the department.

### Areas for improvement

- Increasing take-up of modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11.
- Ensuring greater consistency of marking in Years 9 to 11.

139. Attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2001 was well below the national average. Although some criteria have changed in awarding national curriculum levels, there has been improvement in standards over the last three years, including a considerable increase from 2001 to 2002. Girls have consistently performed better than boys.
140. In 2001, attainment at GCSE in French (there were no entries in German) was well below the national average in the number of A\*-C grades awarded, but above average in the number of A\*-G grades. From a small entry only one candidate gained a grade higher than C. Unusually, girls performed worse than boys in relation to national averages. In 2002 there were only entries in German. Results were significantly higher than those in French in 2001. Well over half of the candidates in a small entry gained grades A\*-C, and all candidates gained grades A\*-G. These represent a considerable improvement over the German results from 1998 – 2000. In general boys have performed relatively better than girls. Since 1998 the average points score of candidates has increased.
141. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are improving owing to non-specialist teaching being eliminated and better curriculum organisation, but they are still below average. Higher-attaining pupils in the present Year 9 are using complex grammatical constructions with confidence and speaking and writing with a high standard of accuracy. Average attaining pupils, while expressing themselves successfully and enthusiastically in class, are less confident in their handling of complexities, and are prone to basic errors. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, communicate well at a simpler level, and appear confident in speaking, listening and reading. They experience difficulty in retaining grammatical rules, which limits their opportunity for effective extended speaking and writing. Attainment targets in Year 8 are being met, especially as higher-attaining pupils are responding well to their teachers' encouragement to extend the content of their speaking and writing work.
142. The wide range of prior attainment in the present small Year 11 groups suggests that it will be difficult to match the standards attained in 2002. Attainment is currently below average, but teachers are encouraging pupils to aim for the higher levels and indicating the means to achieve this through the systematic development of language patterns. Pupils are being stretched and challenged, and they tackle listening and reading with great confidence and accuracy at foundation level. At the higher level, performance is much more variable, as many lack the more sophisticated skills of sifting relevant information from lengthy dialogues and texts. Written coursework and oral presentations show a range from short, unconnected and repetitive sentences to accurate, flowing prose with linked sentences, and competent handling of complex structures and syntax.

143. Given the attainment of pupils on entry to the school, their achievement in all years is good.
144. Teaching is good overall. Three quarters of the lessons were good or better and none were unsatisfactory. A particular strength is the emphasis on developing literacy skills to enhance understanding of German language patterns. There is a sensible and sensitive balance in the use of German and English in the classroom. In the good lessons there is a brisk pace, varied activities, and pupils are involved fully at the start, ensuring that the teaching achieves maximum impact. Pupils respond positively and work responsibly, individually, in pairs, and in groups. Good planning means that pupils are made aware of the lesson's objectives, and that the needs of the lowest and highest attaining pupils are met. ICT is effectively used to enhance language skills. Homework is appropriate and relevant, and directed to extension and consolidation of knowledge. Where lessons are less successful, the pace is slow and inconsistent, activities tend to lack variety and be teacher-led; pupils are not sufficiently involved, and quickly lose concentration or respond passively and dutifully.
145. The department has established a firm assessment policy, which allows regular tracking of pupils' progress and attainment and informs individual target setting. Marking is frequent and consistent in Years 7 and 8, but is less consistent in other years. Teachers give good, constructive feedback to pupils, especially on ways to improve performance and achieve their targets.
146. As modern foreign languages are offered in Year 10 purely as an option, the curriculum does not meet current statutory requirements. However, regulations are in the process of changing. Groups are small, and only one language is offered. In view of the increasing school population, the department and the management need to establish strategies to encourage more pupils to continue with modern foreign languages at this stage. There is good support for pupils with statements of special educational need. Opportunities for using ICT within the subject are good, as pupils have frequent timetabled access to facilities, which are effectively used. The department offers annual trips to Germany, plus the opportunity to exchange with a German link school.
147. Management of the department has been well organised. Clear policies and a detailed scheme of work are in place. The newly-appointed head of department is providing clear educational direction and developing the way forward with firm support from a committed team. Intense and detailed monitoring and evaluation of teaching have recently taken place, and are continuing on both a formal and informal basis.
148. Since the last inspection non-specialist teaching has been eliminated, and lessons for each group have been spaced more advantageously throughout the week.



## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Some very high quality teaching which motivates pupils very well.
- Good pupil/teacher relationships resulting in a positive ethos within the department.

### Areas for improvement

- Curriculum planning and assessment procedures require development.
- Extra-curricular work is under developed.
- Curriculum provision in Years 10 and 11 requires attention.

149. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 study music. In recent years no pupils have taken the GCSE course in music – the only provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 has been as part of an expressive arts course. A separate course in music is planned and is due to begin for the current Year 10 pupils.
150. On the basis of teacher assessments, the standards achieved by pupils at the end of year 9 in 2001 were below the national average. The 2002 teacher assessments were lower. The standards currently being attained by pupils in Year 9 are also below average, with no significant difference between that of boys and girls being observed during the inspection. Pupils understand some standard musical language and terminology, although there are weaknesses in their understanding of notation, such as the names and time values of individual notes. Their basic skills are being developed through enjoyable activities where sounds and symbols are related in a meaningful way. With a little help, pupils are able to read the rhythmic units from a score, combine them, maintain a steady pulse and good ensemble to create short, thoughtfully structured pieces, as seen in a Year 8 lesson where pupils were producing a layered, rhythmic piece. In a Year 7 lesson relating to rhythmic notation to Brazilian music, pupils worked co-operatively in groups, discussing and making decisions about the effectiveness of performance and supportively appraising each group's work. Pupils' composition skills are underdeveloped, as is their ability to use ICT in music – that seen was limited to performance on keyboards.
151. Pupils enter the school with below average standards in music, and given this, their achievement throughout Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are identified and supported appropriately, and their achievement is also satisfactory.
152. The quality of teaching is good overall. Five out of seven lessons seen were good or better, including some excellent teaching demonstrating outstanding classroom practice. Work is consistently well-prepared, the atmosphere in lessons is positive and a pleasant and stimulating environment has been created in the music room. Some of the striking features of the best lessons in Years 7 to 9 include lively pace, good reinforcement of learning, and the active, enthusiastic engagement of pupils leading to effective learning and progress. Even taking the register is transformed into an enjoyable and musically significant experience by controlling the tempo and dynamics of pupils' responses. Their literacy skills are promoted well through the excellent use of language by the teacher, careful and telling explanations and by visual reinforcement.

153. The music curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is in line with National Curriculum requirements, although not all units are planned in sufficient detail. The curriculum plans are not always implemented in a way that ensures secure development of the knowledge, skills and understanding expected of pupils. Work does not always build progressively on pupils' prior learning. These deficiencies are now being addressed. Assessment mechanisms are in place but are not implemented satisfactorily. Even allowing for the practical nature of the subject, there is not enough written work in pupils' folders to act as a record of progress, nor is there any satisfactory evidence to support teacher assessment judgements.
154. Opportunities for the pupils' musical enrichment outside the classroom are provided, for example, through a range of choral and instrumental ensembles, but these are limited, as is the degree of participation. As yet, the standard of attainment in those observed is low - particularly in singing where there is no evidence of skills from curriculum work extending into a significant corporate activity.
155. The number of pupils receiving instrumental lessons is below national norms and attainment is at an elementary level. However, the teaching seen was efficient and enthusiastic. The pupils' attitudes are positive and a secure foundation for future achievement is being laid in this area.
156. There is an overall improvement in the provision for music since the last inspection, although weaknesses remain, particularly in relation to the curriculum and assessment. There have been some staffing difficulties recently and the department is currently staffed by two teachers new to the school, including a very newly appointed teacher in charge of music on a temporary contract. Despite this, he exhibits commitment and resolve and is already having a positive impact – problems are being faced and ideas for improvement are forthcoming. In light of these effective interim arrangements, leadership and management are satisfactory.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning.
- Leadership.
- Staff commitment to improve and capacity to succeed.
- Development of literacy skills.
- Very good extra curricular provision.
- Attitude, behaviour and personal development of pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- To familiarise pupils' work with National Curriculum levels and set individual learning goals to raise attainment further.

157. Teacher assessment of pupils at the end of year 9 in 2001 indicate that standards in physical education were close to the national average. Teacher assessment of pupils' attainment in 2002 showed an improvement. Girls and boys attained similar standards. Evidence from the inspection confirms standards to be in line with the national average. During Years 7 to 9 pupils begin to apply skills accurately with precision and control. This was apparent in a Year 9 trampolining lesson where girls were performing seat

and front drops with good technique. All the girls adhered to safety practices very well. In a Year 7 gymnastics lesson, boys were performing balances and rolls with accuracy whilst highlighting their creative abilities when linking their movements in solo or paired sequences. Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 are developing a very good understanding of health related fitness and realising the importance of warm up and cool down in relation to exercise. The department accords great importance to this aspect of the pupils' physical development, consequently many younger pupils already have a good knowledge of the major bones and muscles linked to exercise.

158. In 2001, the GCSE pass rate at A\*-C grades was well below the national average, although all gained a pass at A\*-G. In 2002, the A\*-C pass rate improved significantly. Boys and girls attain equally. Predicted grades for present Year 11 pupils, based on secure information, suggest an improvement on the 2001 figures, but lower ones than those in 2002. This reflects the different prior attainment of this group of pupils.
159. During the inspection GCSE lessons were observed in Years 10 and 11. The attainment by the end of Year 11 is slightly below national expectations and in line with teachers' judgements. Secure evidence indicates that girls attain better than boys on the theory of physical education. This was evident in year 10 and 11 theory lessons where girls displayed better understanding of anatomy and physiology and sponsorship in sport. Boys perform better than girls in practical lessons. This was apparent in a year 11 basketball lesson where boys were performing the lay up shot far more accurately. Throughout years 7 to 11 the vast majority of pupils are developing their awareness of tactical play and their ability to analyse other pupils performance. It was only possible to observe two core lessons in Year 10 during the inspection, one with girls and one with boys, and, although the standards in these lesson were in line with national expectations, this does not provide sufficient evidence to make a judgement on standards overall. The good curriculum provided for pupils, however, gives them full opportunities to develop expected knowledge and understanding and skills.
160. Pupils' achievement in relation to standards on entry is good. The vast majority of pupils throughout the school work at a level in line with their age and level of attainment, and make good progress. Below average standards of literacy and numeracy skills have less of a negative impact on pupil performance in physical education. Nevertheless, the department puts great importance on developing the pupils' literacy skills. Staff continually emphasise key words and encourage pupils to relate their knowledge and understanding of their physical development. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. The department has adopted a variety of teaching and learning styles appropriate to pupils of different levels of attainment. Activities are matched to pupils' needs. Higher attaining pupils are stretched by more demanding tasks.
161. Pupils are encouraged to learn very well by the very good teaching they receive. In over nine out of ten lessons seen teaching observed was good or better. The very high quality of teaching has a very good impact on the pace and productivity in lessons. It enhances the learning environment and promotes good pupil progress and success. All teachers are very secure in their knowledge of their subject. Teachers' management of pupils and their relationship with pupils are very good. This produces enjoyable lessons, which promote high levels of enthusiasm. Teachers plan their lessons very well. Clear learning objectives are shared with pupils. Teachers continually encourage pupils to develop an understanding and knowledge of their performance in order to become independent learners. The majority of pupils have very good attitudes to learning. Occasionally, some immature behaviour amongst a few boys inhibits learning. The vast majority of pupils are hard working, enthusiastic and

well motivated. Pupils take pride in their work and appearance. Pupils collaborate effectively and evaluate each others work sensitively.

162. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. It is exciting and stimulating, capturing pupils' interest and expanding their physical, intellectual and creative abilities. Extra curricular provision is very good where the take up from girls is outstanding. Pupils have opportunities to participate in competitive team games and to gain representative honours. Assessment procedures are sound, but they are not fully used to show how pupils are progressing. Although pupils are informed of their National Curriculum levels at the end of each term, they are not informed of them more regularly and the levels are not used to set individual learning goals and help pupils gain a fuller understanding of the standards they are attaining.
163. The physical education department is very well led. The staff form a very strong and committed team. The department contributes significantly to the ethos of the school. Very good accommodation enhances the very good provision provided by the department. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Good use of ICT in some lessons.
- Good support for pupils with special needs.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards well below those expected by the locally Agreed Syllabus.
- Inadequate Agreed Syllabus coverage in Years 10 and 11.
- Inadequate planning of curriculum in Years 7 to 9.
- Much unsatisfactory teaching.
- Unsatisfactory subject leadership.

164. There are no national or external tests in religious education for pupils at the end of Year 9. Standards of work seen on inspection were well below Agreed Syllabus expectations. Concentration on copying of notes gives pupils little time for thought or reflection on religious issues. By Year 9 pupils can recognise the beliefs of different religions, for example on the after-life, but not in any depth; they are unable to comment on their importance for believers. No examinations, such as GCSE religious studies, as a full or a short course, were taken in 2001 or 2002. Standards at the end of Year 11 are well below Agreed Syllabus expectations.
165. The achievement of pupils by Year 9 is unsatisfactory. Where a topic is considered in each year there is some development. For example, in Year 7 the reason why religious education is important after September 11 is discussed, then in Year 8 the reason it is a rite of passage, and in Year 9 the ultimate questions which arise from this event. In almost all cases work is only at a superficial level. There is development from the identification of founders of religions to study of some beliefs and practices. The emphasis is on breadth rather than the depth required; for example, study of a belief in each of six religions, rather than Christianity and at least one other religion, as the Agreed Syllabus requires. In some lessons, boys perform better orally than do girls. No other differences between achievements of groups of pupils, such as those from

different minority ethnic groups, is evident. Achievement by Year 11 is unsatisfactory because there is insufficient time to fulfil the Agreed Syllabus requirements. The business ethics module in Year 11 personal and social education has neither enough time nor challenge to enable pupils to improve on the level at the end of Year 9.

166. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. Only half of the lessons seen were satisfactory or better, with all unsatisfactory teaching in Years 8 and 9. The teacher teaching most of the religious education lessons is newly-qualified and his subject knowledge is good. However, learning outcomes are insufficiently focused to use this expertise to maintain pupil interest. In contrast, in Year 11, despite teachers being unqualified in the subject, good planning and class control ensures pupil involvement. Planning integrates spiritual and moral issues, and incorporates basic skills well, but the lack of focused learning outcomes means that some parts of the plan are not taught. ICT is well used to support teaching of business ethics and to research beliefs of religious groups. This leads to good concentration levels and pace of work from pupils. Development of understanding is limited because expectations are low and teaching has little challenge. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory or better in most lessons. However, misbehaviour and some lack of interest in Years 8 and 9 results from poor classroom management. Insufficient urgency in delivering content leads to superficial coverage, and concentration on facts rather than reasons why, for example, people are atheist or agnostic. Homework is carefully related to lesson themes. Work is marked, but rarely with more than a grade; the school marking policy is not followed. Good support from learning assistants in many lessons ensures that pupils with special needs learn as well as other groups of pupils.
167. Timetabling of religious education in a variety of rooms, in two different buildings, seriously limits use of appropriate resources, and makes development of a subject identity difficult, since wall display relates for example to mathematics or history. Textbook resources are satisfactory up to Year 9, but limited for subsequent years, both in the department and library; there are no religious education CD-ROMS. Insufficient curriculum time is allocated to fulfil Agreed Syllabus requirements at Key Stage 4. The Year 9 scheme of work is inadequate and overall there is more emphasis on breadth than the required depth, and on describing practice rather than explaining the reasons for it, and its impact on believers. This makes it difficult for pupils to achieve Level 5 or above.
168. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Some issues relate to previous years and could not have been resolved in the three weeks that the newly qualified teacher who has responsibility for the subject has been in post. There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of religious education. Oversight of the curriculum has failed to ensure that planning for Years 7 to 9 is complete; there are no targets to ensure compliance with Agreed Syllabus requirements for Years 10 and 11. Arrangements for sharing of good practice in teaching the subject are not in place.
169. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Standards have declined and there is no improvement in provision in Years 10 and 11. Copying of notes is still overemphasised. However, some specialist teaching is now in place.